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Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7818th meeting
Tuesday, 22 November 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Ndiaye/Mr. Seck/Mr. Ciss	(Senegal)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Coleman
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

Water, peace and security

Letter dated 14 November 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2016/969)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

Water, peace and security

Letter dated 14 November 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2016/969)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Djibouti, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Guatemala, Haiti, Hungary, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Mexico, Morocco, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palau, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, the Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, Uganda and Viet Nam to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Danilo Türk, Chair of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace; Ms. Christine Beerli, Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross; and Mr. Sundeep Waslekar, President of Strategic Foresight Group.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Joanne Adamson, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations, to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/969, which contains a letter dated 14 November 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and give him the floor.

The Secretary-General (*spoke in French*): I thank the Senegalese presidency and His Excellency Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal for having organized this debate at a crucial moment.

By 2050, at least one in four human beings will live in a country where the lack of fresh water is chronic or recurrent. Climate change will only aggravate these difficulties, especially in basins shared by several countries. It is particularly important to coordinate water management for the more than 260 international watercourses and transboundary aquifers, which are at least as numerous.

(*spoke in English*)

Access to water can exacerbate communal tensions. Competition for scarce water resources in Darfur and Afghanistan has contributed to tensions. In Peru, the extractive industries' impact on water is the most common driver of protests and violence against companies by local communities.

Armed conflicts can themselves affect access to clean water, for example through the deliberate destruction of water facilities, attacks against power plants that provide water supplies, and the collapse of water treatment and sewage systems. These impacts are often compounded by the breakdown in water governance and delivery networks that typically occurs during conflicts. Air strikes against water and electrical facilities in Syria, and the contamination of groundwater resources in Gaza, are further examples of the negative impact of armed conflict on water. We have also seen warring parties seek to control dams and dikes. Controlling strategic dams on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers has been at the centre of military operations carried out in Syria and Iraq by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

Despite these serious challenges, we must also recognize the potential for cooperation around shared water resources. Three-quarters of United Nations

Member States share rivers or lake basins with their neighbours. Shared water has historically, and sometimes rather improbably, brought adversaries together and served as a crucial confidence-building measure in both inter-State and intra-State conflicts. In the second half of the twentieth century, more than 200 water treaties were successfully negotiated. International river agreements have enhanced security and stability in river basins. The 1960 Indus Waters Treaty between India and Pakistan has famously survived at least two wars and numerous clashes and diplomatic crises. In the Nile Basin, last year's signing of a declaration of principles by the Governments of Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan, followed more recently by various formal and informal dialogues, has been a vital confidence-building measure. And in the Senegal River basin, riparian States — including Mali, Mauritania and Senegal — have had a long history of benefit-sharing, providing a cornerstone for regional stability and peace.

The United Nations has actively promoted the potential of water for cooperation. The work of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia on hydro-diplomacy is one notable example. The Centre uses its good offices, convening power, analytical capacity and partnerships with regional organizations to promote dialogue and build trust. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes strengthens transboundary water cooperation and sound water management. It is now open for accession to all United Nations Member States, offering the opportunity to create a global framework for dealing with transboundary water issues.

More generally, the United Nations actively promotes mediation and dialogue as effective tools for preventing and resolving disputes over water and natural resources. The United Nations Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Environment Programme have published a useful guide containing practical strategies and best practices in this area.

Across all these efforts it is also important to recognize the central role played by women in local water management. Decisions over water allocation can have a significant impact on their well-being and safety, and that of their children and families. For this reason, women often and rightly advocate for water issues to be directly addressed within peace agreements, as we saw, for example, with the Darfur peace process.

(*spoke in French*)

To mobilize concerted diplomatic action, the President of the World Bank Group and I convened the Global High-Level Panel on Water. This initiative promotes the global and cooperative development and management of water resources, to which Senegal's contribution has been crucial. I encourage Council members to find ways to support the implementation of the Group's recently adopted action plan.

(*spoke in English*)

Water challenges affect us all. Let us use this Security Council meeting to highlight the value of water as a reason for cooperation, not conflict. And let us commit to investing in water security as a means to ensure long-term international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Türk.

Mr. Türk (*spoke in French*): Today, the Security Council is meeting, for the first time in its history, to debate the issues of water, peace and security. It is a great honour to be able to address the Council as Chair of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace.

It is very important that this discussion be being led by you, Sir, and by Senegal, a country that has developed an effective model of active and peaceful cooperation with its neighbouring countries, particularly in the field of transboundary cooperation on water. I pay tribute to Senegal and to Mr. Léopold Senghor, its late President, who several decades ago persuaded the Heads of State of Guinea, Mali and Mauritania to found the Senegal River Basin Development Organization. Today, Senegalese President Macky Sall and his counterparts from those three neighbouring countries have capitalized on this legacy.

This experience is also a source of inspiration at the global level. It contributed to the establishment of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, which I have the honour to chair. The Panel was established in November 2015 at the initiative of 15 States Members of the United Nations, including my country, Slovenia, and will present its report in September next year. The Panel's objective is to propose concrete recommendations that could be implemented. The aim

of our efforts is not only to understand the problem, but also to assist in the search for solutions. The guiding idea of our work is the prevention of armed conflict.

(*spoke in English*)

Recent United Nations reports have repeatedly emphasized the importance of the prevention of armed conflicts and preventive diplomacy more generally. Transboundary water cooperation is a prime example of a potentially powerful tool for long-term prevention, as explained a few minutes ago by the Secretary-General. Countries with developed mechanisms of water cooperation seldom resort to war. Moreover, water cooperation has a significant stabilizing effect on those areas within States that are benefiting from cooperative water management installations. Other briefers today will discuss the experience and potential of water cooperation for stability and peace in some detail. On my part, I wish to emphasize four fundamental points.

First, while the transboundary mechanisms of water cooperation are well known and historically tested, they are still relatively few in number. Out of the 263 shared river basins, involving 145 States in the world, only 84 have joint water management bodies. Some of those institutions are not very effective. Clearly, political support for additional international cooperation in this domain is needed, and much of that political support can be generated by the United Nations, in particular by the General Assembly and the Security Council. Such support would be particularly timely now with regard to new initiatives such as the Congo River Basin Blue Fund, which is gaining momentum at present.

Secondly, political support for transboundary water cooperation arrangements has to be complemented by financial incentives. This, too, is an important political priority. The international financial institutions and private investors have an important role to play. The idea of setting up a special blue fund at the global level will be explained in a short while by the President of the Strategic Foresight Group, Mr. Sundeep Waslekar. I believe that idea has to be given particular attention.

Thirdly, in its preventive mode the United Nations has to be attentive to intersectoral cooperation relating to water use aimed at reducing tensions and the potential for violent conflicts. Quite naturally, sovereign States exercise their sovereign powers in that regard. Therefore, international cooperation has to be in full accordance with the sovereign rights of States. However, it is important to understand that good practices exist and that they should be encouraged globally. They include voluntary codes of practice on water management involving a variety of stakeholders. Such codes of practice should be encouraged and, as appropriate, assisted. The Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace is studying the existing practices and will be prepared to share its findings with the appropriate United Nations bodies.

Fourthly, the United Nations system has been dealing with various water issues for a long time now. The coordination of those activities is organized through the UN-Water mechanism, which brings together all the relevant United Nations organs, funds and agencies. However, that activity has been mostly concentrated on technical, environmental and legal questions, and only indirectly addresses the fundamental political and security aspects. Now the time has come to address the political and security aspects of water cooperation more directly, in the Security Council and in the General Assembly. I would like to emphasize that the Security Council can play a critically important role — as a decision-maker with the proven ability to innovate and as a catalyst that brings an important political message to the other parts of the United Nations system.

Those are some of the basic considerations. In addition, there are specific aspects of the links between water, peace and security that affect the daily work of the Security Council. Allow me, therefore, to briefly refer to some of those aspects.

Expert studies on contemporary armed conflicts suggest that water is seldom the single cause of armed conflict. However, water issues are often among the important contributing factors. Moreover, water usually becomes a military and strategic tool during an armed conflict, a weapon of war that most often affects civilian populations. It is in that context that some of the most serious concerns arise.

Historically, the Security Council has accumulated vast experience in addressing the dangers affecting civilian populations in situations of armed conflict. Ever since resolution 1265 (1999) was adopted, the protection of civilians has been one of the main themes in the Council's decision-making. The Council has since been engaged in deciding on "appropriate measures" in response to situations where civilians are targeted or where humanitarian assistance is being deliberately obstructed. While the results of those efforts have so far been mixed, the direction is clearly correct. The

Security Council deserves all support in its efforts to protect civilians.

The question today is how to increase the effectiveness of those efforts, including in matters concerning water supply to civilian populations in armed conflicts. Clearly, humanitarian organizations with long experience of working in conditions of armed conflict, in particular the International Committee of the Red Cross, deserve every support. In particular, they have to be supported in their cooperation with local actors in protecting water resources and water installations. Their long-term presence in affected areas and their familiarity with both water situations and local actors in water management are indeed key assets that have to be recognized and, as appropriate, protected.

However, the efforts of local and international humanitarian organizations and specialists to ensure the functioning of water infrastructure during armed conflicts may not always suffice. They may require additional means, including diplomatic and — yes — military means. Obviously, that opens up a set of difficult questions, in particular in situations of urban armed conflicts. Difficult, but not necessarily impossible. Defence of water for the civilian populations by the affected populations themselves is a legitimate form of self-defence and can be legitimately assisted by military means.

The principles of proportionality of the use of military force and distinction between military and non-military objects provide the legal framework for such assistance. Although it might not be possible to authorize each and every action, it should be within the reach of the Security Council to convey a sense of legitimacy to those military actions whose sole purpose is the protection of water sources and installations that are vital for civilian populations. Again, the principles of proportionality of the use of military force and distinction between military and non-military objects would be an essential platform for such an assessment.

The compelling nature of assistance to legitimate defence of the affected civilian populations and of effective protection of water resources and installations is closely related to the entire future of international humanitarian law. The increasingly internal and increasingly chaotic armed conflicts of our era have generated violations of humanitarian law that were unimaginable in the past. The weakening of the authority of humanitarian law needs to be stopped. New norms are not urgently necessary, although improvements in legal architecture are always welcome. The more immediate need is to strengthen the effectiveness of existing norms on the protection of civilians and to find ways of ensuring compliance. In that regard again, the policy guidance and specific actions taken or authorized by the Security Council will be of great importance.

Let me now turn to another aspect of the linkage between water, peace and security. Water sources and water installations are among the major areas of concern for peace operations and in the context of peacebuilding — both of which are fundamental tasks of the United Nations. Obviously, the defence of civilians, robust defence if necessary, has become part of the doctrine of United Nations peacekeeping. Defending civilians and the mandates of peace operations strengthens the credibility and legitimacy of the peacekeeping in the eyes of the people whom the United Nations has to serve.

The recent report (see S/2015/446) of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations is very clear on that. However, in paragraph 95 of its report, the Panel also emphasized that Member States must provide peace missions with adequate capabilities to implement their mandates. This is a highly pertinent emphasis worthy of the particular attention of Governments and the United Nations. "Adequate capabilities" should include water and electric-power specialists. Most Member States with highly developed military systems have skilled military specialists trained to deliver vital services, including drilling, water distribution, sanitation, power production and distribution. It would make sense if Member States could, in the context of their effort to strengthen the capacity of United Nations peacekeeping, provide, as appropriate, the assistance of their specialists for the evaluation, repair and rehabilitation of water-supply systems so as to restore or establish basic services for affected populations in the early stages of deployment of peace operations.

Furthermore, the current development of the concept and practice of United Nations field missions offers some promising possibilities. It is encouraging that the Global Field Support Strategy places stronger emphasis on environmental management, including water, both at the level of field missions and globally. It will be important to give water-related aspects the priority status they deserve and that periodic

evaluations of water-related-issues practice in the context of peacebuilding take place regularly.

In addition, water infrastructure is a vital part of any peacebuilding activity. Historically, and in more recent United Nations practice, peace agreements have included clauses on water use and water cooperation. Cooperation in shared water basins is a historically proven factor of post-conflict stabilization and peacebuilding. It is therefore natural for the Peacebuilding Commission to include water management and water cooperation among its priorities in its efforts to promote an integrated, strategic and coherent approach to peacebuilding, as noted in relevant General Assembly resolutions. I believe that water is vital part of such an ideal concept of peacebuilding. This year's reviews of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture have already provided a good framework for such prioritization, and I hope this effort will continue.

In conclusion, I have referred to some of the key questions considered by the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace and some of those frequently considered by the Security Council. I am grateful for the opportunity to be able to present these ideas and thoughts to the Security Council today.

There are obviously other, more specific questions related to the protection of water resources, prevention of conflicts over water quality, development of mechanisms of hydrodiplomacy and other questions considered by our Panel. As I mentioned at the beginning, in less than a year from now, we shall prepare our report. It goes without saying that our Panel will be ready to share its findings and proposals with the Security Council as well as other relevant bodies of the United Nations. I hope that the Security Council will remain seized of the matter of connections between water and peace and security in future.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Türk for his briefing. I now give the floor to Ms. Christine Beerli.

Ms. Beerli (*spoke in French*): I thank the Senegalese presidency for having inviting the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to participate in today's important debate and give its views based on its experience on the ground.

(*spoke in English*)

None of us can live without water. We need water to drink. We need water to grow food. We need water to cook. And we need water to stay clean. Water is a basic human need and the most fundamental humanitarian requirement. Water is a symbol of life in the poetry of every nation. In the great musical culture of Senegal, the stringed kora of the Griot is made from the same gourd that people use to carry water. The Griot knows that water is for the body what song is for the soul.

In the ICRC's experience, the vital importance of water often makes it a highly contested resource in armed conflicts. Water points become strategic — whether they are rural wells in arid lands or pumping stations in sophisticated cities. In many wars, water systems are also caught up in fighting, becoming damaged, degraded or destroyed. Even when supply exists, accessing water can become extremely dangerous — especially for women and girls who have the responsibility in many societies for water collection. Children can spend hours queuing and collecting water when they should be at school.

Water is directly linked to public health. Polluted drinking water or insufficient water for washing causes people to get ill, which puts additional strain on health facilities and medical personnel already struggling to cope with high demand and limited capacity. Water supply is also clearly linked to forced displacement and migration. When water supply fails, a civilian population has no option but to move. People are forced to leave their homes, leading to large movements of populations.

The provision of a safe, sufficient, regular and clean water supply is a humanitarian priority for the ICRC. In over 80 countries, our water teams work daily to provide water for populations affected by conflict and violence. We work with local authorities, commercial partners, local communities and national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies to ensure our water programmes are sustainable.

Last year, we covered the urgent water needs of 28 million people. The rise in protracted urban warfare in the Middle East and increasing concentrations of internally displaced persons in urban areas in the Lake Chad Basin have caused an exponential increase in the scale and technical complexity of our water operations. Our water operations often see us working across conflict lines, as we repair pumps and pipes that are essential to all sides. Encouragingly, in several conflicts, opponents will cooperate on water when they

will not cooperate on anything else, giving us the access and supply chains we need to keep the water flowing.

Armed conflict has direct and indirect impacts on people's access to water and, over the many years of a protracted conflict, both types of impact have a degrading cumulative impact on water supply. The direct impacts of armed conflict are immediately obvious. Damaging attacks on electricity substations, water-storage installations and piping can render them unusable, cutting off tens of thousands of people in a single strike. Skilled personnel may also be killed, injured or displaced. Indirect impact is less obvious but equally significant. The lack of skilled personnel and shortage of critical supplies means no maintenance for essential infrastructure, which soon deteriorates to the point where water is unsafe or entire populations are cut off.

In protracted armed conflict, this cumulative impact on services is hard to reverse. We have seen this phenomenon recently in Syria, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, where water services are severely reduced and we have resorted to water trucking.

International humanitarian law is clear on the humanitarian significance of water. It places various obligations on parties to conflict to protect water installations. International humanitarian law provides special protection for objects indispensable for the survival of the civilian population, like drinking-water installations and irrigation works. Objects containing dangerous forces, such as dams, are also protected from attack. International humanitarian law also provides important general protection against attacks on civilian objects and attacks that affect civilian populations. Parties to conflict must take precautions in attack and refrain from attacks expected to cause excessive incidental damage and also consider the reverberating effects of their actions on civilian populations.

Despite these clear rules for the protection of essential services like water, the ICRC continues to see populations suffer the consequences of a lack of respect for international humanitarian law. The risk of reverberating effects from damaged water installations is a reason why the ICRC urges parties to conflict to avoid using explosive weapons with wide areas of impact in densely populated areas. Even when aimed at achieving military objectives, the use of such weapons can incidentally damage vital infrastructure located in the vicinity of the targets, severely disrupting the provision of services on which civilians depend for their survival. Parties to conflict have an obligation to ensure that the basic needs of the civilian population are met and that their dignity is protected. Water is essential to a life with dignity, and parties to conflict, Government donors and humanitarian organizations must work together to support resilient urban services during armed conflicts.

The ICRC welcomes the initiative of the delegation of Senegal to discuss such an important topic here today and we urge members of the Council to take the following measures on water and armed conflict. First, they must respect international humanitarian law and take into account the interdependence of essential services, such as water, health and electricity, and the cumulative impact of protracted armed conflict on essential water supplies for civilian populations. Secondly, they must recognize that dialogue on water needs between warring parties is critical, and they must help to facilitate it. Thirdly, they must prioritize and support effective partnerships between local authorities, service providers and humanitarian organizations to ensure resilient water services. Finally, the Council must ensure that the Council remains seized on the issue.

(*spoke in French*)

We thank the President for giving the ICRC the opportunity to speak to the Council today on such an important topic and for providing each one of us with water while we are here.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Beerli for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Waslekar.

Mr. Waslekar: I want to compliment the Government of Senegal and Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye for convening this debate on water and peace and security, which I understand to be happening for the first time in the history of the Security Council.

I would like to take the opportunity to address three questions. First, why should the Security Council address the linkage between water and peace and security? Secondly, what can the Security Council do to create a positive relationship between water and peace? Thirdly, what can the United Nations system and the international community do?

Regarding the first question, the Secretary-General pointed out in his briefing how water can be a source of crisis. He also pointed out how water can be a source of cooperation. One of the greatest challenges of our time is how to transform water from a potential source of crisis into a potential instrument of cooperation. If the political and intellectual capital of the world can be applied to that question, then I am sure that we will able to find an answer.

What are we talking about? Currently there about 2 billion people living in shared river basins in the developing world, so the future of 2 billion people is what this meeting hopes to address. Often we feel that water is a local or provisional issue that can be managed or addressed through good governance at the local level or good transboundary cooperation at the regional level. We are increasingly finding out that water is also a global security issue. In the past six years, we have seen that when the mismanagement of water is combined with the mismanagement of climate change and the mismanagement of politics, which has happened in some parts of the world, it has led to the displacement of a large number of people. Refugees have fled from one part of the world to another, which has had severe political consequences in different parts of the world.

Whatever we do regarding the management of water in combination with the management of the social contract and political relationships in any one region can have implications on other regions of the world. That is what we have seen, particularly in the past three years. If we look ahead and take into account the rate at which humankind is depleting water resources, there is a risk that the innate amount of fresh water could decrease by 25 to 30 per cent in the next 20 years. That could lead to a decline in the production of whole grains. That means that by 2030 or 2035, some countries that are self-sufficient today would have to enter the international whole grains market as importers. If there were an additional demand of 100 to 200 million tons of whole grains, then we would certainly find that the price of whole grains would skyrocket across the world. Even though those importing countries would be only in some parts of the world, their impact would be felt by poor people across the world. Therefore, we must recognize the global nature of the relationship between water and peace and security.

Regarding the second question, the Strategic Foresight Group — with which I have the privilege of being associated — has undertaken a number of studies. By assessing situations in 148 countries that share river basins — more than 220 shared river basins total — we have found that any two countries that are engaged in active water cooperation with political support do not go to war for any reason, whether related to water or not. Thus, there is a direct correlation between water cooperation and reduced risk of war, which we can see through the water cooperation quotient. Therefore, it is in the interest of the international community to further examine and explore that relationship.

We have also found that there is a continuum of the management of water relations. Water managers can manage day-to-day relations in river basins. However, when it comes to introducing large infrastructure projects and addressing the question of large public goods and priorities between water and other public goods, such as large investments and security, then the involvement of managers of political systems and the managers of security establishments is very necessary. At the routine level, water managers can manage water relations. At a more complex level, the involvement of national, regional and global security establishments and the mainstream political leaders is absolutely necessary.

Therefore, water is not just a subject relevant to Sustainable Development Goal 6. It can also be positively used as a tool to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 16, which is geared towards peaceful and inclusive coexistence. Therefore, water is a subject that is very much owned by the Security Council. I would urge the members of the Security Council to consider something unconventional and unprecedented. Considering that the impact of the management of water is not always confined to one region — there is always a risk that it can have implications across the world — and considering that there is a positive relationship between water cooperation and comprehensive peace and security and considering that water can make a useful contribution Sustainable Development Goal 16, I urge the members of the Security Council to apply their minds to see if they can come up with an unconventional, unprecedented way to proclaim water as a strategic asset of humanity. The members of the Council are the best judges as to how the Council might best achieve that. They know the rules and procedures of the Security Council, whereas I am an outsider.

I was touched by the briefing by Ms. Christine Beerli of the International Committee of the Red Cross

(ICRC). The work that ICRC staff are doing in some conflict zones is amazing and highly commendable, but we need to support them and we need to support similar organizations. How can we do that? Earlier this year, the Security Council adopted resolution 2286 (2016), on protecting medical installations and personnel. Would the Security Council consider adopting a follow-up draft resolution inspired by resolution 2286 (2016), in the same spirit, to protect water installations and the personnel guarding them? I urge the Council to consider that proposal.

I would also like to go further and ask Security Council members, in particular the permanent members, once in a while to consider negotiating a ceasefire in protracted conflicts in order to repair and restore water systems. Such a ceasefire could last a week, or at least three or four days. Let me explain my logic for that request. Many members of the United Nations system, particularly some of the permanent members of the Security Council, are investing huge resources and wasting their talent and scientific minds to find water on Mars, the moon of Jupiter or some other part of the universe so that human civilization can continue to exist. If we can invest human, intellectual and political capital to find water on another planet, why can we not find some way and some means to negotiate a ceasefire just for a few days from time to time to protect the water resources and water installations on this planet? I strongly urge the members of the Security Council to consider that proposal as well.

It is also important to explore how we can better protect water resources. The Secretary-General and Ms. Beerli mentioned how water resources are being increasingly targeted. The Department of Political Affairs has a Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force. Perhaps the mandate of the Task Force can be specifically expanded or sharpened to include the protection of water resources from terrorist actions. The Department of Political Affairs will be a better judge as to how that could be done.

Finally, there is also a role for the international community — beyond and inspired by the Security Council — to incentivize water cooperation. We must not only look at the protection of water infrastructure, but also at how we can bolster preventive diplomacy and take preventive measures to promote water cooperation. In that regard, the role of financial incentives is very important. The Secretary-General and the President of the World Bank launched a very important panel on water as a sustainable development goal. My friend Danilo Türk is sharing a panel on water and peace and security. The objectives of those two panels can be linked through a very innovative measure. The world should consider creating a blue fund exclusively to take care of interests, insurance and other related costs of collaborative water infrastructure — not within countries but rather infrastructure through cooperation between the countries. If we can do that, and if we allocate only $1 billion annually — which can be easily carved out from the Green Climate Fund's $100 billion annual budget — then that $1 billion annual investment can create $30 billion of collaborative infrastructure worldwide. The mathematics of that idea can be explained later.

The question, therefore, is that we have to look at water as an instrument of cooperation. We have to bear in mind that it is a potential source of crisis, but we have to find a way to convert it from potential source of crisis to potential instrument of cooperation. In order to do that, we have to look ahead. We have to be unconventional. We have to look at things we have not thought of. I would urge the Council to consider all options to help shape our future. It is a philosophical matter of how we look at time. We often think that first there is a past, then there is a present and then there is a future. In reality, first there is a future. What today is the future will become the present tomorrow, and what is present today will become past tomorrow. In truth, first there is a future, then there is a present and then there is a past. If we looked at the flow of time in that direction, we would take it upon ourselves to share the future and, instead of looking at the past, we would look at the future. We would look at prevention. We would look at the next generation and, once we start looking at the future in a creative way, I am sure that the talent, political will and capacity worldwide will help find solutions to our problems. The Security Council and your presidency, Mr. President, can provide some guidance and inspiration.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Waslekar for his briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Senegal abroad.

At the outset, I would like to express how pleased we are to have the Secretary-General participate in this high-level Security Council debate on a topic that is of particular interest to him. Allow me to also reiterate,

on behalf of Senegalese President Macky Sall, the warm congratulations of Senegal for the excellent work carried out during his two mandates at the helm of the United Nations, and for his significant contributions to building peace and security and promoting and protecting the interests of the international community, and particularly those of Africa, in the areas of development and human rights.

I also thank and congratulate the briefers today for their relevant and structured briefings. They have presented a comprehensive overview of the stakes and challenges linked to the issue of water. I am referring to the Secretary-General; Mr. Danilo Türk, Chair of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace; Ms. Christine Beerli, Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross; and Mr. Sundeep Waslekar, President of Strategic Foresight Group.

For the first time in its 71-year history, the Council, in a formal meeting this morning, is broaching the issue of water and its relationship to peace and security. Certainly, the issue has featured in the background of certain Council decisions, particularly presidential statement S/PRST/2011/15, of 20 July 2011, and presidential statement S/PRST/2013/15, of 2 October 2013. The former deals with the consequences of climate change and, in the latter, the Council urges all parties to conflicts to abstain from attacking civilian installations, such as water supply stations, and to avoid establishing military positions in inhabited areas.

We also can recall that seven months ago almost to the day, President Sall presided over the very first Council debate on water and peace and security, under the Arria Formula. That commitment at the highest level reflects the importance that Senegal attaches to the problem. Indeed, it also explains why the Secretary-General and the President of the World Bank appointed the President of Senegal as a member of the High-level Panel on Water on Water. It should be recalled that the mandate of that Panel, which is made up of 12 Heads of State and Government, seeks to spur global action with a view to accelerating the effective implementation of Goal 6 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That goal seeks to guarantee access to water and sanitation for all and ensure the sustainable management of water resources. It is that ongoing commitment to the issue that enabled my country, through its Minister for Water and Sanitation, to hold the co-chairmanship of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace. Its mission is to offer a global architecture to make water an instrument of peace and cooperation, rather than a source of conflict.

It is clear that water is essential to life, if not life itself. It is a daily part of an individual's life at every stage. As a fundamental element of geology, water is also necessary in the areas of biology, the conomy, culture and worship. It is for those reasons that the United Nations has made it a human right and acknowledged that access to water is essential for the enjoyment of all other human rights. Regrettably, today climate change, urbanization, demographic changes and unsustainable economic practices, as well as the dizzying increase in consumption, all contribute to a reduction in the quantity and quality of water. Moreover, although 71 per cent of the Earth's surface is water, less than 3 per cent of it is freshwater, of which 2.2 per cent is in glaciers and groundwater reserves. As a result, a mere 1 per cent of the Earth's water is left to meet the needs of the 7.35 billion human beings and those of plants and animals.

Above and beyond the scarcity of water, the resource is unevenly distributed throughout the planet, with nine countries sharing 60 per cent of the world's water reserves while 28 countries experience regular water shortages, and 80 occasional shortages. A total of 1.5 billion people do not have access to safe drinking water. Predictions are even more alarming. They warn that, by 2050, at least one in four people could live in a country affected by chronic or recurrent freshwater shortages.

The competition for access to water might seem inevitable because, in addition to being a natural resource, water could take on a geostrategic dimension, which would make it a domestic security challenge for a number of States. Nevertheless, the legitimate efforts of our countries and communities to guarantee access to such a vital resource can and must be deployed in a sound, organized way in order to guard against misunderstandings and even tensions, especially in the case of water resources being shared among several States. Recent history teaches us that such a hypothesis is not a fictitious one.

In that regard, it is true that commendable efforts have been made over time towards the peaceful and concerted management of water resources, with the signing, since the end of the Second World War, of more than 200 bilateral and multilateral cooperation instruments covering some 60 international

watercourses. In the same vein, it should be recognized that shared waters have historically and sometimes, improbably, brought States closer together and formed the basis for closer ties and confidence-building.

As far as it is concerned, Senegal, whose history, geography and name bear the indelible imprint of its eponymous watercourse, has always striven to promote what we refer to today as water diplomacy. As the Secretary-General recalled just now, it was that constant faith that formed the basis for the establishment with its neighbours, almost 45 years ago, in 1972, of the Senegal River Basin Development Organization (OMVS) — made up of Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal — and, in 1978, the Gambia River Basin Development Organization, whose members are the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal. The OMVS is now cited as a successful model of cooperation in the area of collective water resources management. Its originality lies in the fact that its facilities and infrastructures belong to its four member States, investments are made by all of them and the benefits are mutually shared.

Cooperation is the path of salvation. But it must be acknowledged that there remains much to be done in that area. In the same vein, it is worrisome to note that, to date, 158 of the 263 international watercourses remain without a cooperation framework. Moreover, according to many experts, unequal access to water could be the main cause of future conflicts. By way of illustration, the *2015 World Water Development Report* states that

> "[i]nter-State and regional conflicts may also emerge due to water scarcity and poor management structures."

A decade earlier, former Secretary-General Kofi Annan argued that

> "fierce competition for fresh water could well become a source of conflict and war in the future".

But he tempered that by stating,

> "that same competition could be a catalyst for cooperation".

In the same vein, the question of water is sometimes linked, for political reasons, to territorial, social and economic disputes. Even if water is not the stated reason for a war, nonetheless, in many conflicts its control is an important issue that could fuel conflict. In other situations, water is used simply as a weapon of warfare or to put pressure on vulnerable populations. In a spirit of solidarity, the international community must combat the phenomenon that highlights how the issue of water pervades conflicts and its unfortunate humanitarian consequences — just underscored so eloquently by our briefers. It is also incumbent upon us to step up our efforts to secure sources and supply chains and to guarantee water quality, which, in the context of global threats, must be kept out of the reach of the many criminal gangs and terrorist groups.

The Security Council must choose between potential future conflicts and a future of peace. In that regard, one thing only deserves to guide our action. If nothing is done, water could lead to future clashes in the way that fossil fuels and land are at the origin of today's conflicts. The notion of preventive diplomacy therefore reflects all of the fullness and nobility of its meaning. To sail in another direction would be to row against the current, if not to swim in troubled waters, given the various factors whose combined effects accentuate the scarcity of the resource and the unbridled race for its control. That means that the Council should pay more attention to the issue in order to prevent the occurrence or the exacerbation of tensions between States sharing water resources, in particular, cross-border water resources. In that regard, it is well established that the risk of tensions has increased between countries upstream and downstream of the same river basin, with situations that, in some cases, could lead to regional instability. That is the whole point of Senegal's proposal to create a group of friends of the water-security initiative here in New York, which I invite delegations to join.

In conclusion, Senegal would like to thank the Security Council and the many Member States for their interest in its initiative on water, peace and security, and hopes for a proactive stance on the issue, which is the only attitude capable of negating the disturbing predictions. More than 69 countries are participating in today's open debate, which shows the importance that the international community attaches to the problem. In particular, my country dares to hope for a clear message from the Security Council that it will contribute to making water flow only in the direction of fostering the development, peace and harmony of peoples. In doing so, the most precious resource will ultimately cease to be the object of misunderstandings, concerns and bloodshed.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to the other members of the Security Council.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's important meeting and for the comprehensive concept note (S/2016/969, annex). Our discussions today are an important follow-up to the Arria Formula meeting held in April, presided over by His Excellency President Macky Sall, in which Malaysia was pleased to participate.

We have followed Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's comprehensive views on today's topic with much interest. Similarly, I wish to convey my appreciation to the briefers, namely, Mr. Türk of the Global High-level Panel on Water and Peace, Ms. Beerli of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Mr. Waslekar of the Strategic Foresight Group for their respective expert views and briefings.

The competencies of the General Assembly and the processes that it has established with regard to multilateral approaches to sustainable development and the environment, including the management of transboundary waters and water resources, require no further elaboration. However, it cannot be denied that there exists a legitimate linkage between the issues of water, peace and security that falls arguably within the purview of the Council. Therefore, for the purposes of today's discussions, I will focus my remarks only on the issue of water as a resource and the potential conflicts that could arise from competition over water as a scarce resource.

Against that backdrop, my delegation is of the view that these discussions demonstrate the Council's ability to assume a preventive posture by considering issues that could be drivers of conflict. It is hoped, therefore, that the discussion today will be frank with a forward-looking exchange on how the United Nations, and the international community as a whole, could address potential threats to international peace and security related to competition and conflict over natural resources, specifically in this case over water and water resources.

The question of water insecurity cannot be limited merely to issues of access. Water insecurity should be seen as a potential threat multiplier that can aggravate or be aggravated by existing tensions and conflicts rooted in political, social and economic factors. In that connection, various possible causes of conflicts related to water, including rapid population growth, industrialization, agriculture and urbanization, were highlighted earlier. The list should not preclude the impact of military occupation.

A particular situation that stands out in that regard is the dire situation of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory, specifically their right to water and their access to water resources. Since 1967, Palestinians have lost access to the water of the Jordan River; 90 per cent of Palestinian water resources have been under Israeli control since 1967. Furthermore, the apartheid wall not only cuts off Palestinian access to their own land, but also cuts off access to many important aquifers and wellsprings. The exploitation resulting from the annexations of Palestinian water resources is illegal under international law. It is therefore doubly illegal for the expropriated water to be used and channelled to the illegal settlers.

In addition, the decision to prevent Gaza from rebuilding its water and sanitation infrastructure, following the 2009 and 2014 attacks, is abhorrent and unacceptable. We call for an immediate end to the systematic and cynical exploitation of Palestinian water resources, which has caused much anger, frustration and despair among the Palestinians. Such unsustainable situations could trigger not only a political insecurity crisis, but potentially even a health crisis in an already volatile region that can ill afford further threats to peace and security.

Across the globe, my delegation is encouraged by the pursuit of collective efforts on transboundary water cooperation in the context of regional cooperation. Initiatives such as the Senegal River Basin Development Organization in Africa, the establishment of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia and the Blue Peace initiative in the Middle East, which seek to harness water as an instrument of peace as opposed to a cause of conflict, are inspiring.

I am pleased to share the fact that in my own region, South-East Asia, the 10 member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) pursue such a collaborative approach under the framework of the ASEAN Working Group on Water Resources Management. Since 2005, the Working Group has spearheaded the implementation of the ASEAN strategic plan of action on water resources

management. In essence, that format provides a platform for enhancing cooperation, promoting networking and engaging in collaborative actions aimed at the practical implementation of integrated water resources management in the region.

At the global level, we commend and support the ongoing effort and work of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, led by Mr. Türk, to strengthen the global architecture aimed at preventing and resolving water-related conflicts and tensions. We look forward to the release of the Panel's final report and recommendations as future contributions to the ongoing debate on water, peace and security.

In conclusion, I wish to highlight three additional points. We acknowledge the potentially destabilizing effects that could arise from poorly managed conflicts and tensions related to water and water resources. It is therefore vital that the capacity and capability of preventive diplomacy mechanisms and institutions, including those deployed by the United Nations and by regional organizations, continue to be supported. It is vitally important to understand and address the negative impact of armed conflicts on water resources and the related infrastructure, especially in those areas currently ongoing conflicts, where we have seen the callous contamination of water and the destruction of water-related infrastructure resources employed as a military strategy or tactic, which is in flagrant violation of applicable international humanitarian law norms and standards.

In the post-conflict recovery phase, the provision of safe water should rank among the highest priorities. Water, sanitation and the associated delivery infrastructures are critical to economic development and the recovery of livelihoods in the aftermath of conflict. In that regard, the formation of partnerships, capacity-building and the transfer of technologies are key to ensuring sustainable water management in peacebuilding efforts. At the same time, collective efforts aimed at achieving water-related targets under Sustainable Development Goal 6 would help in addressing potential conflicts driven by competition over increasingly scarce water resources. It is also vital that our collective efforts be further intensified in addressing the issues.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, for being here today among us and for your thoughts on the topic that we are addressing here today. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General, as well as Ms. Beerli, Mr. Türk and Mr. Waslekar, for their in-depth and provocative briefings.

Uruguay is taking part in this debate, bearing in mind the very appropriate treatment of the topic of water in the setting of the General Assembly. It is worth noting that General Assembly resolution 64/292 explicitly recognizes the human right to water and sanitation, essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights. General Assembly resolutions 68/157 and 70/169, have dealt with that resource, as did Millennium Development Goal 7 in its target 7.C, which called for reducing by half "the proportion of persons without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation", and now Sustainable Development Goal 6, entitled "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all".

In reality, the current armed confrontations originate in complex and multiple political, economic and social threats. Although we recognize that the struggle for natural resources constitutes one of the primary aggravating factors in armed conflicts, it cannot be considered to be the sole cause. The need to preserve water supply systems and sanitation services in conflict zones is vital, because, to some extent, that reduces the effect of the plague of war on the civilian population. Uruguay would like to express its absolute repugnance at the use of water as a weapon of war, without exceptions, and it defends the human right to water, indispensable for the life, health and dignity of persons, and therefore Uruguay has enshrined it in its Constitution.

We are concerned that, well into the twenty-first century, more than 700 million people lack suitable access to potable drinking water. That requires profound reflection and action. For that reason, Uruguay welcomes the fact that, in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community has undertaken the commitment under Goal 6 to ensure the availability of water and its sustainable management and sanitation for all. Uruguay firmly believes in cooperation and policies focused on human rights as the effective means for fighting scourges such as water scarcity, poverty and climate change.

At the regional level, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina have signed an agreement on the Guarani aquifer, one of the largest underwater reservoirs in the world. The agreement enshrines the

principles of sovereignty, environmental responsibility and the use of resources in a manner based on rational and sustainable criteria. Cooperation among States is vital in order to achieve more efficient management of water resources and to detect possible elements of friction. By way of example, Uruguay has made significant efforts in order to increase its cooperation in that area. In that regard, following the ruling of the International Court of Justice, Uruguay and Argentina have managed to establish an integrated mechanism for the environmental monitoring of water in the Uruguay River basin, which will strengthen the sustainable development capacities of both countries.

In the case of Haiti, where cholera poses a serious threat to health, the improvement of water systems is a priority. In that regard, Uruguay has contributed to Haiti not just through the presence of its troops as part of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti but also through the provision of water-treatment units aimed at improving living conditions for the civilian population.

Only through long-term solutions related to capacity-building, investment in infrastructure and the sustainable management of water resources through international cooperation can the challenges of making water accessible to all be overcome. Access to water is a human right, but given its vital importance, it is also part of the world's natural heritage, creating tangible and intangible assets and generating civilization and peace. To fight over water would be a lamentable contradiction.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I thank you, Sir, for convening this important debate. We also appreciate the very useful introductions made by the briefers. Ukraine aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later this morning by the observer of the European Union. In my national capacity, I would like to add the following.

Water, being a source of life and development, has become a major strategic challenge. Under the constant and growing pressure resulting from human activities, population growth, accidents and climate change, water resources require us to be more active in adopting strategic approaches to the promotion of best solutions and to strengthen our international commitments.

Striking an optimal balance between the practical economic needs of society, its sustainable development and the protection of water resources and the provision of a consistent foundation for a human-friendly environment in the future has become one of the most important tasks of the international community. That long-term objective is yet to be achieved. It is also noteworthy that, in light of the scarcity of fresh water and its uneven distribution across the globe, competition for water can lead to conflicts. Even in the twenty-first century, our technological and scientific advances have not yet completely satisfied humankind's thirst, meaning that the potential for conflict remains.

The Security Council has rarely dealt with water issues, as it has focused mainly on the role of other natural resources, such as gold, diamonds and timber, in fuelling armed conflicts in some countries of Africa. On the other hand, for instance in the Sudan, water scarcity is considered one of the drivers of the conflict in Darfur.

Throughout human history, warring armies have not shied away from employing asymmetrical warfare tactics such as poisoning water wells, redirecting water flows to flood an enemy and so on. Even today, we remember well the threats of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant to blow up the Mosul Dam, which would cause a real humanitarian disaster. That most recent example clearly demonstrates the need to carefully consider the issue of the protection of critical infrastructure through the promotion of international cooperation on preventing terrorist attacks against it. In that respect, I would like to thank all of the participants in yesterday's Arria Formula meeting on this subject for a constructive discussion.

For the Security Council, which bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the issue of water should become an essential element of its overall work in the area of conflict prevention. Quite recently, Council members had a fruitful discussion on that topic at the Arria Formula meeting this past April, initiated by the Senegalese delegation. Many United Nations Member States shared the position that the effective inter-State management of water resources could prevent the eruption of conflicts around the world. Ideas and proposals expressed at that meeting provide a solid basis for today's consideration.

I would like to recall and commend the Senegalese efforts aimed at promoting peace and stability in the West African region through the strengthening of transboundary cooperation in sharing the water of the Gambia River.

The European continent is also working on expanding inter-State cooperation on water. For example, Ukraine, together with 13 other countries and the European Union, is actively working on the sustainable and equitable water management of the Danube River through the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River. That organization has grown into one of the largest and most active international bodies of river-basin management expertise in the world.

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight the important role of such instruments as the 1992 Economic Commission for Europe Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, adopted in Helsinki, and the 1997 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses, adopted in New York.

I also wish to note the activities of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia in promoting regional cooperation on water resources management, which is a core factor for strengthening stability in that region.

In my country, the Water Code of Ukraine is the main regulatory act that governs legal relations in the area of the protection and rational use of water recourses. It is based on the principle of basin water-resources management. Nowadays, Ukraine continues to implement the basin-management principle in practice, in particular by continuing its consistent work on establishing basin authorities, which are structures that, at the local level, directly implement the policy of integrated water resources management in the interests of local communities and economy.

I would like to use this opportunity to draw attention to the resolution on protection of the environment in areas affected by armed conflict that was adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its second session, held in May in Nairobi. That document reflects the international community's unanimous support for the protection of the environment in times of armed conflicts and reaffirms the need to respect the relevant international obligations under international humanitarian law.

Ukraine has learned a lot about the importance of this issue from our own recent experience of external aggression in the Donbas. We therefore believe that greater awareness and the practical implementation of the provisions of the resolution, as well as of relevant international law, will foster protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts and reduce conflict-related environmental impacts, ensuring the successful delivery of the environmental dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In our statement, we have touched upon only a limited number of aspects of the water issue. At the same time, strengthening our efforts in conflict prevention and peacebuilding in post-conflict societies requires a more focused approach to the protection of water supplies in various regions of the world. We hope that today's deliberations will result in useful ideas on how to address this subject in an effective and results-oriented manner.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Foreign Minister Ndiaye for presiding over the Security Council's open debate on water, peace and security. My thanks also go to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing. China listened carefully to the briefings by Mr. Türk, Chair of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace; Ms. Beerli, Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross; and Mr. Waslekar, President of Strategic Foresight Group.

Water is indispensable to human survival and to sustainable economic and social development. In recent years, climate change and environmental degradation have led to frequent natural disasters. In some countries there is a severe shortage of drinking water. The problem of water scarcity is increasingly acute and prominent. That is not only a development issue, it also has a bearing on peace and security. The international community should approach the issue by making efforts in three areas.

First, it must strengthen the preservation, development and management of water resources in order to remove the root causes of conflicts driven by water scarcity. All countries should prioritize the safeguarding of peace and security, strengthen cooperation with others, improve scientific development of water resources and allocate water resources reasonably and conserve and efficiently use them. They should comprehensively upgrade their water-security-related capabilities so that the sharing of water resources can actually enhance mutually beneficial cooperation. In that way, we can also avoid friction and conflicts caused by water scarcity.

Secondly, we must engage in in-depth international cooperation on water resources. The international community should, via cooperation platforms such as the World Water Forum, conscientiously implement international consensus on water and sustainable development. Support should be given to the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace and the United Nations and World Bank High-Level Panel on Water and other, similar mechanisms in their efforts to actively promote international cooperation in that area.

The international community should provide further assistance to African countries, including by helping regional organizations such as the Senegal River Basin Development Organization and the Gambia River Basin Development Organization to comprehensively proceed with the preservation, development and utilization of transboundary water resources. African countries should be assisted in enhancing the development of water conservation infrastructure to benefit the African people. Fundamentally speaking, ensuring that everyone has access to safe water is an important safeguard for peace and security. The relevant United Nations bodies should strengthen their coordination and fully carry out their respective responsibilities and duties.

Thirdly, dialogue and cooperation must be strengthened in order to appropriately address issues related to transboundary water resources. Transboundary water resources affect the common well-being of countries on the lower and upper reaches of river basins. Parties should start by safeguarding regional peace and stability and regional common development and should be committed to strengthening coordination and communication so as to promote mutually beneficial cooperation. The relevant United Nations bodies and regional and subregional organizations should, at the request of the countries concerned, play a positive and active role in transboundary water resources cooperation by facilitating dialogue, cooperation and concerted actions among countries so as to contribute to the well-being of people living in river basins.

China places great emphasis on helping African countries and peoples to resolve water shortage problems. Within the framework of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, we have implemented dozens of well-drilling projects in Africa to supply water, including 100 clean energy projects, so as to help African countries to enhance their capacity-building in meteorological infrastructure and improve the preservation and management of their forests. China has also engaged in technical dialogue with other relevant countries to strengthen the exchange of experiences and help those countries develop plans regarding the use of water resources, flood control and disaster reduction, while helping them to upgrade their abilities to manage and develop water resources.

China stands ready to work together with the rest of the international community to promote the sustainable development and utilization of water resources and to promote peace and security in a bid to realize peace, stability, development and the prosperity of humankind.

Ms. Coleman (United States of America): I thank you, Mr. Minister, for your leadership in focusing the attention of the Security Council on the important linkages between water and international peace and security. I also thank our briefers for so eloquently framing the issues this morning.

As we have heard, conflict over water is increasingly a serious global issue. In discussing water, peace and security today, I would like to focus my remarks on two points: first, the example of the Lake Chad basin as an area struggling with water and security and, secondly, the role that the international community can play in helping to prevent water disputes from becoming armed conflicts.

The Lake Chad basin, which spans the border region of Chad, the Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon, is an example of what happens when water scarcities contribute to conflict. Overuse, poor management practices and expanding desertification have caused the lake to recede by approximately 90 per cent. The disappearance of that critical resource, which is the basis of survival for millions of people, has led to territorial disputes and helped nurture the rise of Boko Haram. Boko Haram uses the dying lake as a recruiting base, easily exploiting the tens of thousands of displaced people who are searching for a means of livelihood. Boko Haram deploys brutal tactics of abduction, sexual slavery, killing and looting to terrorize the population, and the resulting armed conflict has left over 9 million people in need of humanitarian assistance.

However, there is a glimmer of hope in that otherwise dark reality. The Lake Chad Basin Commission was established by Governments of the region and civil society to try to peacefully resolve disputes over the lake. The Commission also formed the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to fight Boko Haram — a

powerful testament to the role regional cooperation can play in combating issues that result from water scarcity. It is urgent that the international community bolster its support to the MNJTF to assist in its efforts to counter Boko Haram. In particular, the main challenge for the MNJTF is a severe lack of funding, and therefore we all must recommit to contributing to the Force. Greater international support would be a strong sign of solidarity with the people of the four countries that are bearing the brunt of a terrorist threat that mocks the value of human life. Support to local Governments to help build capacity for rehabilitation and reconstruction would also go a long way in helping to ensure lasting peace and stability.

Conflict over water is not exclusive to the Lake Chad basin, of course. In Syria, poor drought management resulted in the loss of livelihood for thousands of farmers, leading to mass migration to urban areas and fanning the flames of what was already a deep-rooted discontent with respect to Government policies. In Iraq, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant has manipulated strategic dams on the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers as a key component of its strategy.

I doubt that there is a single country represented in this Chamber that is immune to water challenges. I know that the United States is not. With 50 states that share 21 large rivers and more than 20,000 watersheds, we have had to learn to cooperate. For more than 100 years, the United States has had close relationships on water management with both our neighbours, and all three countries have benefited. For example, our 2012 bilateral agreement with Mexico permits Mexico to store water in the United States for drought protection, but it also allows United States entities to invest in water conservation projects in Mexico and then share in the water that is saved. That model has proved to be successful in strengthening water security for both countries and in encouraging investments in water conservation and sound resource management. Drawing from that partnership and others, I would like to share some thoughts on best practices we have learned in helping to keep water disputes from erupting into conflict.

First, the international community should support regional resolution of water disputes by building the capacity of States and stakeholders. Countries require the ability to negotiate, resolve disputes and implement agreements relating to their water resources. That includes the technical skills needed to understand emerging challenges and opportunities, as well as the means to address them. One model of capacity-building is the programme funded by the United States Agency for International Development in the Kadamjay region of Kyrgyztan, which provided technical assistance and resources to better manage water inefficiencies. The programme enabled the construction of a permanent diversion dam, which benefited nearly 2,000 farmers and residents.

Secondly, institutions and processes can help lock-in progress. The establishment of regional organizations, bilateral agreements and information-sharing platforms can all play a role in institutionalizing and maintaining cooperation. The United States has been working with several other donors to develop the Shared Waters Partnership, which supports cooperative efforts on transboundary waters in regions where water is or may become a source of conflict. The programme is a resource to any country looking for support to resolve water issues.

Finally, sound data and impartial analysis are essential to developing a common view of the challenges and opportunities that face us, and they help provide a foundation for decision-making. A project in the Okavango River basin, which is shared by Angola, Namibia and Botswana, effectively used data to give early warning of locations at risk of resource conflict, thereby allowing the parties involved to proactively resolve potential issues before they could develop.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate our support for developing creative, win-win solutions to transboundary water challenges. I thank you, Mr. President, for calling our attention to this very important issue.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): I would like to start by saying that, having listened to what you, Mr. President, had to convey to and share with the Council on the experience of Senegal and the exemplary role that you have been playing in the management of water resources in that region, I can understand why the topic is important, not only for Senegal, but for the world. I would therefore very much like to thank you for convening this meeting and for your choice for our debate this morning. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon; and to welcome Mr. Danilo Türk, Chair of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace; Ms. Christine Beerli, Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross; and Mr. Sundeep Waslekar, President of

Strategic Foresight Group, and thank them for the very important and insightful remarks they shared with us this morning.

Contemporary life is characterized by the scarcity of clear, clean and safe drinking water in increasing parts of the world. Nearly 1.7 billion people in the developing world do not have access to water, while in some countries and regions people take water for granted, wasting it or turning it into an extremely lucrative business. Water has become an essential part of the international political agenda, a global challenge and a critical issue confronting our societies. Water and access to it are a core issue of climate change, health and nutrition crises and environmental degradation, and they are also at the origin of serious social and political conflicts.

The recognition by the General Assembly that water and sanitation constitute fundamental human rights was a decisive step forward in changing the paradigm on how the issue of water is perceived. The establishment of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace — aimed at proposing a global architecture to transform water from a source of potential crisis to an instrument of cooperation and peace — fully translates the contemporary concern for and awareness of the issue, while the management of water courses and river basins became a central piece of international cooperation.

The management of rivers of Senegal and the Gambia is an outstanding example of regional cooperation in the management of water assets by bordering countries through transcending national interests. However, such good practice has not always been the rule, and competition for water for irrigation and grazing and the lack of access to drinking water are increasing sources of conflict in some countries and regions.

The Lake Chad basin has become one of the most dramatic cases where the linkage between water, peace and security is at centre stage. Due to poor cooperation among its adjoining countries, the basin faces enormous challenges that threaten its very existence and the survival of millions of its inhabitants, as it is no longer affords them enough water resources for their livelihoods. Lake Chad benefits around 20 million people living on its shores in four countries, supporting the local economy, which is fundamentally based on fishing, agriculture and cattle-raising. However, the inhabitants see their source of livelihood impaired, with the lake on the brink of ecological disaster, having become a tiny fraction of its former size. That situation has led to security threats linked to growing poverty and unemployment, youth radicalization and terrorism and a huge humanitarian crisis against the backdrop of high rates of population growth, extreme poverty and a food and nutrition crisis.

The international community is called upon to act, as a preventive measure, and to do something tangible in helping to solve the environmental degradation of a region that has historically been an economic and cultural hub of African culture and civilization. To manage the lake's shrinking water resources and reverse the trend towards its extinction, several initiatives at the international and regional levels have been undertaken as a demonstration of the deep concern of the people, Governments and the international community regarding the current state of affairs.

The Lake Chad Basin Commission, a regional initiative, has developed the Lake Chad replenishment project with the objective of regenerating the lake — an ambitious project with the potential to radically change the situation of the basin and the lives of its population. The countries of the region and the international community should assume a collective responsibility by seriously considering extending tangible support to the project. That would turn it into a top priority among the important infrastructure projects being developed by Africa's key development partners, since the prevailing situation has the potential to become yet another hotbed of crisis and conflict, as well as a real threat to regional and international peace and security.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight Angola's experience with regard to water resources and their use and management. The Government of Angola has created a water resources institute that is implementing a national programme for water distribution and sanitation all over the country, as well as the management of transboundary watersheds. However, despite the rich water resources with which Angola is endowed, providing water to every community in the country remains a huge challenge and one that calls for a continuing serious financial, technical and educational effort in which international investment is a key factor.

At the regional level, the Okavango River Basin Water Commission was established by Angola, Botswana and Namibia in order to promote and strengthen

the integrated, sustainable management, use and development of the Cubango-Okavango basin. Respect for best practices, aimed at protecting biodiversity and improving the livelihoods of the basin's communities and human development in the States concerned, has been a fundamental consideration for the programme. The countries of the Water Commission are currently implementing a strategic action programme that can be seen as a good case of regional cooperation and one that other speakers have already mentioned. Water is a key factor in that kind of cooperation.

In conclusion, it is evident that water shortages, shortsighted national interests and mismanagement can cause tensions among populations and nations in many regions of the world, leading to potential sources of conflict. It is therefore key to promote international cooperation on such a critical issue, by raising international awareness, encouraging developing countries to prioritize water and sanitation, and integrating water management into global food security, health and climate-change initiatives in order to preserve peace and security in the world.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): At the outset, I would like to welcome the analyses shared by the Secretary-General and all our briefers this morning. I also join others in paying tribute to you, Mr. President, for your leadership in bringing this vital issue to the Council. An important part of our responsibilities as the Security Council in delivering Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is having a broad enough definition of the threats to international peace and security — not so as to encroach on the responsibilities of other parts of the United Nations system, but to join up with them. And on that, Senegal is providing leadership and putting it into practice through the Senegal River Basin Development Organization. I commend the cooperation that Senegal has fostered with Mali, Mauritania and Guinea on flood defences and hydropower, in a welcome example of managing transboundary water challenges through cooperation rather than conflict.

Sadly, however, we are in need of more examples of best practices. The statistics speak for themselves. In less than 10 years' time, unless we take action, up to 2.5 billion people, a third of today's global population, could be vulnerable to water insecurity. Unless we take action, by 2030 — the year we are supposed to achieve the global goals, including SDG 6, on water and sanitation — the global demand for fresh water will outstrip the supply by 40 per cent.

That is a problem not just for tomorrow but for today. Every year, water insecurity costs the global economy $500 billion. That is $500 billion lost to inadequate water and sanitation, urban flood damage and agricultural wastage through droughts and floods. For the people affected by the issue today, it is about much more than money. It is about life and death. Take the villagers of Kiangwe, in Lamu county in Kenya. Water scarcity there means that inhabitants spend sleepless nights walking to dried-up wells in the hope of securing just a few bottles of water. It means that they are choosing to risk their lives by walking through territory full of Al-Shabaab fighters. It means leaving their children at home, alone, hungry and thirsty. And from that village in Kenya, we can extrapolate to see the risk that this issue poses to international peace and security. A scarcity of water affects food and energy production, damaging economic growth. It increases local tensions, causing conflicts over access to water within States and regions. And as demand increases, it is possible that such conflicts will broaden to include Member States themselves, or even lead to the targeting of water infrastructure. I therefore fully endorse the comments the briefers made about respecting international humanitarian law and about the importance of protecting water infrastructure. I also like the idea that we heard earlier about water-related ceasefires in conflicts.

So what more can be done? The United Kingdom is already active in helping to tackle this set of problems. Over the next four years, we will be contributing $43 million to improving the management of shared waters in southern Africa. We will be doing so in partnership with Germany's Ministry of Economic Cooperation and the Climate Resilient Infrastructure Development Facility, a private-sector organization that designs and finances water infrastructure. In an increasingly water-scarce region, the programme will help the countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) build water infrastructure such as storage reservoirs and irrigation and water-supply systems. It will enable countries to share data on water levels with their neighbours and to issue timely flood and drought warnings, and it will build the capacity of institutions such as river basin organizations to help them manage water resources in shared basins. In doing so, it will help countries in the region use those

resources to grow their economies and reduce poverty. Most importantly, perhaps, we expect the programme to help as many as 3 million of the poorest people in the region, so that they can cope better with the effects of climate variability and climate change, particularly floods and drought.

We will not be doing this alone. Through this project, we hope to raise nearly $500 million from the private sector, including companies with a high dependency on water, as well as from national Governments and development banks, so that together we can plan and construct water infrastructure for communities within SADC member States. Ultimately, tackling water insecurity at a global level will need joint efforts and investments that require regional cooperation. Today's Security Council meeting is an important step towards that collective, cooperative effort. We should not underestimate the scale of the challenge ahead. The global investment deficit for water governance and infrastructure alone is $198 billion a year. Together, however, we can make a difference if we invest in the information, institutions and infrastructure required to deliver water security. And when combined with the right political interventions, including by the Security Council, together we can reduce the impact of water problems at the local, national and regional levels.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate, and I also thank the briefers for their insightful statements. The topic of today's meeting has great significance to Japan, a country where water has played a vital role throughout its history. On a positive note, sound and peaceful water resource management, including the development of watercourse networks from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, helped to form a basis for the peaceful development of modern Japanese society.

The sound development and use of water resources are crucial to achieving peace and prosperity. However, the importance of water has often invited disputes among States. There are 276 international water basins around the world, and, historically, disputes on the usage or distribution of the shared water resource have destabilized the relations among States, sometimes leading to violence. A 2013 report in the UNESCO quarterly journal *A World of Science* noted that there were 44 examples of acute disputes involving violence over water between 1948 and 2008, including over the Jordan, Indus and Nile Rivers. Moreover, more recent cases serve to highlight the fact that water-related infrastructure can be subject to attacks by parties to a conflict. Examples of that include the attacks on a water-treatment plant in Aleppo and the attacks on a desalination plant and wastewater treatment plants in Gaza .

On a different note, the protection of water in conflict situations poses a challenge. In the face of conflict, we must ensure access to water for those affected in order to prevent humanitarian crises. I would like to recall here that under international humanitarian law, in particular article 54 of the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions and article 14 of the Additional Protocol II to the same conventions, it is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, including drinking-water installations and supplies. The Security Council should remain vigilant about potential humanitarian threats posed by the lack of access to water in conflict situations.

In the 2013 UNESCO report it is striking to see that of all of the water-related events between nations, 1,705 events were cooperative ones, while 759 were conflict-related, with 44 acute disputes involving violence. As the Secretary-General and the President of the Council noted today, when managed properly, water resources can be a unifying force rather than a cause of conflict. As such, it is only natural that the Security Council should pay attention to this topic. Japan believes that improving water access, developing water management and governance capabilities and establishing international rules for water usage will help stabilize societies and de-escalate underlying tensions between States. I would like to share some of Japan's efforts on that front.

Improved access to water can help alleviate insecurity among people. In relation to the briefing by Mr. Türk, Chair of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, Japan, as a troop-contributing country to the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan, has built roads to improve access to water resources and has also directly provided water to the people of Juba in South Sudan. As one of the main providers of water to the local population, the presence of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in South Sudan is undoubtedly significant. In that regard, Japan wishes to work closely with the ICRC to improve access to water in that country.

In the Sudan, Japan has supported post-conflict reconstruction and recovery efforts through a multisectoral approach focused on water provision and capacity-building in agriculture, health and rural governance. By enabling people to share in the peace dividend, the population now has greater confidence in the reconstruction efforts, which thereby contributes to social stability.

From the legal perspective, Japan has led discussions on the International Law Commission (ILC) draft articles on the Law of Transboundary Aquifers, which provides a valuable platform for countries to establish agreements for the proper management of their aquifer systems. This year, Japan worked as the coordinator of the draft resolution on the ILC draft articles, which was adopted in the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly this month.

Water is essential to every aspect of human life. That is only natural, given that almost 70 per cent of the human body is water. Humankind should be wise enough to use water as a source of cooperation, not of conflict. I believe that it is important for the Security Council to pay attention to this topic, which might not otherwise receive the attention it deserves. I therefore wish to commend Senegal for taking the initiative to raise this complex but important cross-cutting theme. Japan will continue to support countries in improving their water governance and access as a building block for sustaining peace and security.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are happy to see you, Mr. Minister, once again presiding over a meeting of the Security Council. We are grateful to all of the briefers for their statements.

Water is essential for life. It is only when there is stable access to that key resource that one can talk about sustainable development in all three of its components. In that regard, it is difficult to overstate the timely nature of activities aimed at implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with particular regard to water issues.

Currently, Member States are working in the General Assembly on a draft resolution initiated by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan. That draft resolution is currently in the Second Committee of the General Assembly. It is designed to be a catalyst for the implementation of practical measures in the area of water within the framework of the new United Nations International Decade for Action, called "Water for Sustainable Development".

With regard to the topic of today's Security Council meeting, which links water resources issues and ensuring peace and security, we think that natural resources, in and of themselves, are neutral in nature. Therefore, their presence or their scarcity cannot, a priori, be regarded as an underlying reason for conflicts and for creating a threat to peace and security. The deterioration of the situation with regard to access to water, which can be due to various factors, can exacerbate existing disputes between States, and not necessarily in the water sector, or it can be used to exacerbate tensions between them. However, the root cause of the conflict lies elsewhere, namely, in the ineffective management of water resources, not in the resources themselves.

In that context, we are concerned by the ongoing attempts to directly incorporate a security component into issues relating to water resources. Securitizing the issue of water could lead to the shifting of the focus of international efforts towards a subjective search for "guilty parties" and the subsequent probable imposition of military intervention in the parts of the world concerned, where what is really needed is specific expert activity in order to work out solutions for emerging issues. In that way, emphasizing the geopolitical aspects of water cooperation, including international security, can only complicate the quest for the resolution of a difficult socioeconomic situation and, as a result, hinder sustainable development as a whole.

Our delegation has earlier repeatedly expressed doubts about the advisability of involving the Security Council in various issues relating to sustainable development, as well as involving other non-core United Nations agencies that do not have the appropriate expertise and tools and cannot, therefore, bring added value to discussions on the topic. Under the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Its work is aimed at resolving specific conflict situations, first and foremost through reconciliation among conflicting parties. It is not clear what kind of practical measures the initiators of today's meeting, focusing on the theme of water resources, are expecting from the Security Council.

Bringing issues relating to sustainable development into the busy Security Council agenda can also lead to imbalance in the activities of other major United Nations bodies. We are convinced that adherence to the clear division of labour within the United Nations system is the key to the effective and transparent functioning of the Organization as a whole. In addition, attempting to view the management of water resources from a general perspective, especially through the prism of international security, makes it more difficult to consider the national and regional particularities of water cooperation. This, in the end, can undermine existing agreements at various levels.

The key to resolving issues in the area of water is to increase the general level of socioeconomic, scientific and technical development of countries and bringing their own potential to bear in this respect. The international community must concentrate its efforts on the economic, social and environmental aspects of the issue and, if possible, provide countries in need with the necessary financial and technical cooperation and help them to build capacity in terms of their own national specialists.

Of course, such assistance should take into account the specific requirements of, and strategies for, their own national development as well as regional particularities. The lack of concrete action in this area should not give rise to attempts to identify questionable causes of problems, given that an appropriate resolution to such problems is vital to reducing tensions between countries experiencing water scarcity.

Implementing the 2030 Sustainable Agenda for Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development provides us with additional possibilities for further cooperation among States on the basis of creating a balance among the three dimensions of sustainable development.

We believe that in order to continue a substantive discussion on water issues, it would be useful to consider the lessons learned by the international community from the recently concluded International Decade for Action, "Water for Life" 2005-2015, of which the Russian Federation was one of the initiators. We deem it important to make use of and improve on such experience and practice, as they would enhance our efforts to promote sustainable water use. That is why Russia supported the Tajikistan initiative to declare a new decade on water issues.

In this respect, the United Nations development system can play an important role in helping international efforts in this respect. We are in favour of strengthening inter-agency cooperation under UN-Water, which brings together all the structural entities within the United Nations having to do with water supply. We deem it important to develop and improve the regional and international legal basis in the area of regulating water resources. We note in this regard the positive experience in implementing the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes within the region regulated by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. As regards the issue of the management of transboundary watercourses, we believe in principle that we must arrive at mutually beneficial solutions, on the basis of partnership and respect for national sovereignty.

We regret the fact that the delegation of Ukraine once again tried to use this forum not for the purpose of constructively contributing to discussing the issue of international peace and security, but rather for purposes of propaganda to provide political cover for the criminal activities of Kyiv. The people of the Russian Crimea are not likely to forget that in April 2014 Kyiv ordered the blocking of the locks of the Northern Crimea canal, which at the time provided for 85 per cent of the freshwater needs of approximately 2 million people. Such activities undertaken by the Ukrainian authorities undermine human rights and a whole slew of international humanitarian norms, in particular the right to fresh water and sanitation and the right to food, as well as the relevant resolutions of the Security Council on human rights, let alone article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): I wish to thank you, Minister Ndiaye, and your delegation for having convened this important and very interesting debate. I also express my appreciation to the Secretary-General and the other briefers.

The subject of today's debate is somewhat challenging for New Zealand: on the one hand, we are surrounded by water and that water — seawater — is fundamental to our security and to our economic well-being. On the other hand, with our nearest neighbour more than 1,200 miles away, that water is uncontestably subject to New Zealand jurisdiction, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the

Sea. We are in the lucky situation of not having to share freshwater resources with any other nation or manage the challenges of a shared riverine boundary.

But we know that other members of this Organization have much more difficult situations to manage and that access to critical natural resources can have profound implications for the survival and prosperity of communities, and competition for these has long been a potential source of conflict. Therefore, while I agree with my Russian colleague that there is nothing inherent in water that makes it a security issue, we all know that no resource is more central to human survival than fresh water and that where that resource is scarce or access is restricted, the potential for conflict is real.

As we heard from Mr. Danilo Türk, approximately 145 States and 40 per cent of the world's population fall within 263 international river basins. In some regions, hundreds of millions of people rely on the outflow of just a handful of at-risk water sources. Even in a country like New Zealand, which has mostly clean and relatively abundant fresh water, economic activities and a growing population are putting pressure on freshwater resources in terms of both managing access and maintaining water quality.

Those regions of the world already struggling with water shortages are expected to experience further scarcity as they feel the combined effects of rapid population growth, increased agricultural production and climate change. Moreover, the potential for conflict between countries over transboundary water resources is well documented. Water crises can increase State fragility and act as a threat multiplier.

I wish to highlight three areas where we believe more could be done on this issue to support international peace and security.

First, we need to acknowledge that the effective management of water resources is not only essential for resilience and sustainable development, but is also an effective conflict-prevention tool. In many parts of the world, considerable progress has been made in the collaborative management of water resources, enhancing security and prosperity. This is most effective at the regional level.

There are many successful multiparty management frameworks, stretching from the Mekong River in South-East Asia to the Senegal River and the Lake Chad Basin in West Africa. Effective regional cooperation to mitigate conflict risk must be applauded. We need to support such initiatives and foster them in areas where frameworks are absent.

As the Secretary-General noted this morning, the United Nations can play an important role. We welcome, for example, the work of the Department of Political Affairs, through the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, in fostering dialogue and cooperation on the management of transboundary water resources in Central Asia. Initiatives such as the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace can also allow us to focus our efforts.

Secondly, in existing conflict situations we need to recognize that competition for water resources can affect the conduct and continuation of hostilities. Disputes over water need to be fully integrated into conflict analyses and conflict-prevention and resolution strategies.

The denial of access to water can be used for political leverage or as a weapon of war, as we have heard a number of times this morning. We have seen the shocking and deliberate use of such cynical tactics against civilians in Syria, Yemen and elsewhere. Freshwater systems form part of critical civilian infrastructure and, as such, are protected under international humanitarian law. As the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross made clear this morning, deliberately denying civilians' access to fresh water represents a violation of international human rights law and in conflict settings may even amount to war crimes.

Thirdly, and finally, we need to ensure that water security is not considered solely as a transboundary issue. As the Council heard during the open debate on security challenges facing small island developing States convened by New Zealand last year (see S/PV.7499), security threats can take different forms for such States. For many small island States in my own region, reliable access to fresh water is an existential issue.

Almost half of the small island developing States in the Pacific have no significant surface water resources. Almost as many also lack groundwater reserves. This leaves many communities reliant on unpredictable rainfall patterns for fresh water, representing a threat to the sustainable development and health and, ultimately, the viability of many Pacific populations.

Climate change effects on the region are likely to include more intense droughts and the potential contamination of available groundwater resources. Those impacts can exacerbate security risks. New Zealand has been working with its Pacific partners to address a range of water-related vulnerabilities across the region, including rainwater-harvesting systems in Kiribati and Vanuatu and strengthening national water management and delivery systems. We are also working towards improving supply and reliability of water supplies for drought-prone islands in Tuvalu, Tokelau, Cook Islands and the Marshall Islands.

In conclusion, ensuring water security for the world's population represents one of the most critical challenges facing the global community. Ultimately, that can only be achieved through effective regional and international cooperation. Doing so will enhance prosperity and security by fostering resilience and trust. It can help prevent conflict and save lives.

I thank Senegal for its work in the area and the briefers for their instructive contributions. We must continue to lend our full support to such efforts.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the delegation of Senegal for convening this important debate on water, peace and security. I would also like to thank the briefers for their important contributions.

Our planet suffers from the unequal geographic distribution of potable water resources. As every study and international report has stressed, the scarcity of water will be the primary cause underlying many challenges leading to conflicts among States. That is reflected in numerous disputes covered in the Security Council in which competition over the control water resources has become a primary cause of conflicts.

Egypt suffers from water scarcity since it relies and depends on a single source for its potable water, the river Nile. Egypt is also situated in the arid region of North Africa where rainfall is scarce. Egypt's water scarcity problem is compounded by overpopulation. The per capita share of renewable water sources for Egypt is 600 cubic meters per year, which means that the people of Egypt are below the real rarity threshold. Moreover, adding to the problems of water scarcity, Egypt's share of water coming from the Nile has remained unchanged at 55.5 billion cubic meters annually, which does not meet its basic needs suppressing 102 billion cubic meters per year. It is difficult to rely on underground water reserves as they are located at extremely profound depths and represent a non-renewable source of potable water. All those factors are compounded by the fact that Egypt is a downstream country. The repercussions of climate change has affected the Nile basin.

Egypt believes that water should be a catalyst for cooperation, thereby achieving development in water security. Accordingly, Egypt helped found the Nile Basin Initiative in 1990. Today, Egypt is implementing bilateral projects with the Nile Basin Countries to benefit from those water resources without encroaching upon the interests of any single country. In keeping with the efforts that Egypt initiated in the 1960s, it began implementing the Egyptian initiative for the development of the Nile Basin countries in 2012, including joint projects in water, agricultural, commercial, economic and medical areas.

As well as bilateral and regional efforts aimed at promoting cooperation and security among neighbouring riparian States, Egypt believes in the crucial role that the United Nations can play in preventing conflicts fuelled by competition over water resources or preventing any one party from adopting unilateral measures that run counter to the principles of common benefit and thereby threaten the water security of those who share the same watercourse. That can be achieved through the following measures.

First, it can be accomplished through abiding by the principles of causing no harm and providing prior notification among riparian States of the same river, especially with regard to upstream States in their relation to downstream States. In that vein, the implementation of projects by upstream countries on common watercourses that are not based on comprehensive studies showing no consequent negative impact on other riparian States, especially with regard to the downstream countries, represents a flagrant violation of those two principles.

Secondly, countries must respect their obligations within the framework of international law, including bilateral and multilateral agreements based on cross-border water resources. Countries must also abide by their rights and duties in line with international humanitarian law.

Thirdly, other international non-State parties, in particular charitable institutions, banks and construction companies, must respect international norms for establishing water facilities on cross-border

watercourses. Such entities must stop financing or construction if there is no prior approval of all riparian States, in particular the downstream States, to prevent causing any future disputes among those countries.

Fourthly, international expertise must be exchanged and successful experiences shared in the joint management of water resources, while at the same time developing existing mechanisms to address all challenges relating to the common benefit of water resources. We should also adopt a comprehensive approach for managing joint water resources that would ensure the participation of all States in the management process and the accrual of shared benefits. In that regard, we recall the vital role played by the European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance, which is an awareness-raising example for countries throughout the world of Europe's success in the area.

Fifthly, the United Nations must assume a clearer role in developing the cooperation mechanism among riparian States with regard to tansboundary rivers, as well as capacity-building, to maximize the benefits derived from water and efforts to prevent conflicts resulting from water issues among nations.

The theme of water as a source of achieving international peace and security or as a threat to the latter requires our sustained attention. We must address the issue in a timely manner, or else the prophecy made in 1991 by former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali — that future wars will be ignited by conflicts over water resources — will become a reality. Although the world is more aware today of the importance of preventing conflicts, water could be the most pressing entry point to activating prevention mechanisms.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by warmly thanking the Senegalese presidency for organizing this essential debate on the relationship between water, peace and security. I would also like to thank Mr. Danilo Turk, Chair of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace; Ms. Christine Beerli, Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross; and Mr. Sundeep Waslekar, President of Strategic Foresight Group, for their very edifying briefings.

Against the backdrop set out in the excellent concept note (S/2016/969, annex) circulated by the Senegalese presidency, I would like to make including three messages. The first is that water should never be a source of division, but rather a factor for cooperation between States. That is an essential element. For that purpose, we must use and promote the major conventions on water use, namely, the Economic Commission for Europe Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, agreed in Helsinki, and the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses, agreed in New York. It is true that natural resources are at stake in many conflicts. That has been the case for at least 40 per cent of them over the past 60 years, according to consistent estimates.

Climate change of course exacerbates the situation, in particular because of its impact on land degradation and desertification. But even in times of war, the sharing of water resources can facilitate dialogue between the warring parties — for example, the discussions between Jordan and Israel and of the South African agreements signed during the wars in the 1970s and 1980s.

In that context, in order to help States to make the sharing of water resources a tool for cooperation, we need an equitable multilateral framework endowed with high-quality expertise. That is why France so actively supports and promotes the two essential tools of international law that we have at our disposal. The first tool is the Economic Commission for Europe Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, known as the Helsinki Convention, which has been open to all States Members of the United Nations since 1 March. The second tool is the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses, known as the New York Convention.

The Helsinki Convention, we must underscore, provides a dialogue and arbitration mechanism for cases in which there are tensions between States situated along the same river, lake or aquifer. It includes a secretariat and a legal and technical support mechanism for States parties, but also for non-State parties. Those two Conventions are the primary instruments for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6, on water and sanitation, and Sustainable Development Goal 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions, under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I therefore welcome the involvement of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace in the promotion of the two Conventions that I have mentioned. I also would like to emphasize the fact that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction has an

important role to play in encouraging States to become parties to the two Conventions on the management of transboundary watercourses.

My second message is that the Security Council has a key role to play in the essential issue of water-resource management. It must ensure that there is protection of the infrastructure and other essential services, in particular water, but also electricity, during conflicts and post-crisis phases. Goods that are indispensable to the survival of civilians are protected under international humanitarian law. Human services are part of that protection, as is the quality of many other services, such as health services, as the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross recalled a while ago.

The Security Council must therefore ensure respect for humanitarian law. It must also ensure that peacekeeping operations have a minimal environmental impact. On the other hand, the Security Council has to study and learn all of the lessons in the operational recommendations on these issues that the High-Level Panel on Water and Peace will formulate in 2017. We look forward to those recommendations on the global architecture for the prevention and resolution of water-related conflicts and on water use as an instrument for cooperation and peace.

That leads me to my third and final message, which is of a more general nature. It is high time to reflect on the global water architecture. The current global water governance is not up to the challenges of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Its fragmentation weakens it. That is why France thinks that it is necessary to facilitate dialogue on the issue of water-resource management among Member States and United Nations agencies. Several United Nations agencies are working on that issue: UNESCO on surface and groundwater resources, the United Nations Environment Programme on resource quality issues, and UNICEF and the World Health Organization on the links between water resources and people's access to drinking water.

In that regard, France is in favour of establishing a space for dialogue on water issues in their entirety to cover access to water, but also water quality, pollution and use, as well as the sustainable and integrated management of resources, the protection and restoration of aquatic environments, climate change and prevention as a response to disasters.

In short, those are comments that I wanted to make on this essential issue of water, peace and security. The underlying thread of my statement and the central message of France is that concerted management of water resources, in particular access to drinking water, is not only a technical subject, it is also a vital issue when it comes to development, human rights and security. It is therefore a top priority for our Organization. The Security Council, naturally alongside the General Assembly, has every legitimate right to be seized of the matter. I am thoroughly convinced that our discussion today, thanks to you, Mr. President, and the Senegalese presidency, is both very enlightening for all of us and very promising for the future.

Mr. Suárez Moreno (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad, and the delegation of Senegal for convening this open debate on an issue that is so important for the future of humankind. We would also like to commend Mr. Danilo Türk, Ms. Christine Beerli and Mr. Sundeep Waslekar for their briefings.

In analysing the water issue, UNESCO indicated in its 2015 report that population growth, urbanization, migration and industrialization, along with increases in production and consumption, have generated ever-increasing demands for freshwater resources. In addition, about 1.2 billion people live in areas where water is physically scarce. Approximately 748 million people do not have access to an improved source of drinking water. Two and a half billion persons do not have access to basic sanitation facilities, and 1 billion people relieve themselves in the open air. An estimated 1.8 billion people use a source of potable water that is contaminated with faecal bacteria. The farming sector accounts for approximately 70 per cent of all freshwater extraction globally, and more than 90 per cent in most of the world's least developed countries. The United Nations has also indicated that by 2030 the world is projected to face a 40 per cent global water deficit under the business-as-usual scenario. The consequences of such tensions in an interconnected world will be local, cross-border and global. In that respect, we must keep in mind the issue of climate change, which has had negative global impacts, and in the case of countries in Africa its devastating effects have already been seen, affecting health, subsistence, food, the water supply and security in general. Such a complex reality

complicates the fragile political and security situation in some States of the region, rendering all the more difficult a solution through a comprehensive approach to those conflicts.

As was indicated in the Arria Formula meeting on the same theme in April, all of the aforementioned elements have an significant impact on peace, security and development. With that said, we are convinced that we must broadly and democratically address those elements in the General Assembly, which is the organ mandated to address issues of sustainable development, and water in particular.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that socioeconomic development depends on the sustainable management of natural resources, including water, and establishes the commitment to addressing shortages of water supply and water use more efficiently. To that end, Sustainable Development Goal 6 contains important elements and strategies for achieving those goals. Progress towards the achievement of these objectives will be considered annually in the High-level Political Forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, taking into account the indivisible, integatred and interrelated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In that context, SDG 6 will be considered more closely in 2018, which is why we must strive in that framework to assess the achievements and challenges to be overcome in order to achieve a fair and equitable form of sustainable development in which the three dimensions — social, economic, and environmental — are reflected in a balanced manner. Moreover, we must not forget that UNESCO has been working continuously under its mandate to assure that countries manage their water resources sustainably through the International Hydrological Programme; the Institute for Water Education, which is headquartered in Delft, in the Netherlands; the more than 20 research centres across the world; and the water-related UNESCO chairs. UNESCO is also leading the drafting of *The United Nations World Water Development Report*.

In conclusion, we wish to express that in keeping with the times and with the solutions that the planet requires, the search for integrated initiatives contributes to the preservation of life and human rights for present and future generations as a fundamental value of the relationships and cooperation among States in order to guarantee the establishment of a just, equitable and prosperous world order in the context of sustainable development.

Mr. González de Linares Palou (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Sir, and Senegal for providing us with the opportunity to discuss the linkages between water, peace and security, in the light of the success of the Security Council Arria Formula meeting in April. I also thank the Secretary-General and the briefers for their important statements.

Water management has become the management of risk related to the insecurity of water and exacerbated by climate change. The most recent report on global risks developed by the Economic World Forum cites the crises associated with water as among the most pressing global risks, given their societal impact. In the light of such threats, it is increasingly important to turn to water diplomacy, which must play a fundamental role and can play a role in preventing conflict and settling disputes. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes a Goal dedicated exclusively to water and sanitation, which is a key step in the right direction. Similarly, the United Nations recognition of the human right to water and sanitation is a subject that has been driven forward for years by Germany and Spain.

Many countries continue to lack the appropriate institutions to manage water. It is specifically the incapability of Governments to supply enough potable water to meet the needs of their populations that often serves as the source of conflict. Spain has thousands of years of experience in the management and good governance of water. Our experience has developed around chronic shortages in which we had to learn how to balance demand for water in all its uses with the protection of the environment, in terms of both our own river basins and those we share with our neighbours Portugal and France.

In addition to water, Spain also has experience that it shares with its partners, both bilaterally and in regional cooperation, such as our cooperation in the Iberoamerican Conference of Water Directors and the Joint Spain-Algeria Water Strategy in the Western Mediterranean Basin. Similarly, through the Water and Sanitation Cooperation Fund for Latin America, Spain is contributing to the efforts of the international community to put the 2030 Agenda into practice.

We in the Security Council have often seen how armed conflict can lead to abuses of international humanitarian law and violations of human rights with

respect to the obligation to protect civilian structures, especially the right to access to water. Deliberate attacks on potable water facilities, obstructing access to repair workers and shortages of fuel and materials to undertake repairs not only are potential war but also threaten the health of civilians, given the high risk of disease in circumstances where water, and drinking water in particular, is scarce. We must not forget that the real victim of the use of water as a weapon of war or in political or military negotiations between parties to conflict is the civilian population itself.

In such circumstances, the international community must make a special effort, inter alia, to ensure the conduct of independent investigations into attacks on protected civilian structures; document their impact on the civilian population, health-care systems and the environment; guarantee the unrestricted, continuous and safe access of humanitarian personnel and their missions, especially with respect to such valuable resources as water; and promote exchanges of good practices in coordination committees and successful practices in protecting water networks and infrastructure in armed conflict.

Over the past two years, Spain has championed the importance of promoting the preventive function of the Security Council. In that regard, in June 2015, together with Malaysia, we organized an Arria Formula meeting on climate change as a threat to security. In March of this year, we co-presided with Angola an Arria Formula meeting on food security, at which we clearly heard the Director-General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization say "that there is no peace without food security". I would add that there is no food security without appropriate water management. More recently, last May, together with Egypt, we organized a Security Council briefing focused on a holistic analysis of the possible security implications in the Sahel of desertification as the main effect of climate change in the region. These issues — climate change, food security and desertification — are intrinsically linked to the challenge that water insecurity can pose for peace and security.

I would therefore like to conclude by thanking the Permanent Mission of Senegal and the country's Minister for Foreign Affairs for the wise choice of this topic and by reiterating our hope that the Security Council will in future continue to analyse these issues within its sphere of competence.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of Ukraine has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I am sorry to take the floor again. First of all, I would like to highly recommend to my Russian colleagues to listen to the original language that I use in my statements. I did not mention Russia by name a single time. Likewise, in my statement, I never referred to Crimea, but since Crimea was mentioned by the representative of Russia, I would like to put on the record the following points.

The territory of the autonomous Republic of Crimea as of today remains under occupation by the Russian Federation. Under international law, it is the occupying Power that bears full responsibility for the consequences of its illegal actions. The statement made by the Russian representative earlier in this Chamber is a testament to the inability of the Russian occupation authorities to address the essential needs of the local population in any satisfactory manner. Instead of owning up to its unlawful actions and attempting to correct the wrongs it has committed, the Russian side opted to use the issue of the water supply in Crimea as a propaganda tool.

If the Russian Federation is sincerely concerned about the issue it raised, it can start by ending the diversion of scarce water resources in Crimea to feed the needs of the growing military infrastructure and military personnel on the peninsula. The next logical step would be to start the process of deoccupying the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, thereby contributing in a positive way to addressing the issue of water availability in Crimea.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): As regards the situation in Crimea, I note that it was not the peaceful citizens of Crimea who refused the water from the Dniepr; it was a purposeful act on the part of the Kyiv authorities, which turned the humanitarian situation basically into a catastrophe. The water blockade did not stop there; it was followed by blockades of energy and food.

As regards the situation in the Donbas, in the most recent report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, it is stated very clearly

that, as a result of military activities, the infrastructure is suffering, including through interrupted access to water. The report appeals to all sides, including the armed force of Ukraine, in all circumstances to ensure respect for the provisions of international humanitarian law and to avoid damaging objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, including water filtration facilities.

The President (*spoke in French*): I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Security Council to carry out its work expeditiously. We still have 50 speakers on the list. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly invited to circulate their texts in writing and deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber. I would like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a reasonable speed so that interpretation may be properly provided.

I now give the floor to representative of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Kamaldinov (Kazakhstan): We truly commend the Senagalese presidency for drawing attention to the issue of water insecurity, which poses new threats to which the Security Council must begin to pay urgent attention.

Scientific studies have indicated a fourfold increase in violent confrontations over water during the past decade. The risk of conflicts over water is growing because of increased competition, inadequate or poor management and, ultimately, the impacts of climate change. Shortages, poor water quality or floods will risk creating instability and State failure, increase regional tensions, and divert countries from global cooperation. Water on its own is unlikely to bring down Governments. What is dangerous are shortages that threaten food production and energy supply and put additional stress on Governments struggling with poverty and social tensions.

As water shortages become more acute beyond the next 10 years, tensions arise over control and distribution of water resources. Water supplies or resources are used for political or military goals by State and non-State actors. We also witness disputes in which water resources are a major source of contention and conflict in the context of economic and social development. The urgency of this situation demands timely information-sharing, early warning and the prompt and appropriate use of existing available mechanisms and entities, with key stakeholders to be mobilized. Best practices and lessons learned would help strengthen the approaches devised.

Kazakhstan faces a high degree of environmental pollution, with some parts of the country still suffering from shortages of water. The drying up of the Aral Sea — 70 per cent of which has already been lost) — and the Syr Darya riverbed negatively impacts ecosystems in Central Asia. Both of these situations call for close cooperation and coordination among the various countries of the region.

We commend the work of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia on water-related issues. The Centre efficiently promotes dialogue and build trust within the region. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes also works actively to create a global framework for dealing with transboundary water issues and strengthen transboundary water cooperation and sound water management in the region and beyond.

Kazakhstan has initiated the creation of the Central Asian Investment Fund to implement water projects in order to co-finance the construction and renovation of water facilities and infrastructure. We have also proposed establishing a regional centre for water security, as well as the joint development and signing of a pact on water and environmental security in Central Asia.

Water security is increasingly becoming one of the defining factors for human progress and stability. Kazakhstan, as a member of the Group of Friends of Water, is committed to championing water security for the benefit of all. This commitment will continue during our term in the Security Council in 2017 and 2018 and beyond, and we will be active players in all multilateral actions that promote water security, peace and development.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Vieira (Brazil): I thank you, Sir, an Senegal for convening this meeting. I also thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Danilo Türk, Ms. Chrstine Beerli and Mr. Sundeep Waslekar for their interventions.

The relationship between water, peace and security should be considered with prudence and caution by the Council. Like climate change, to which it is

intimately connected, water scarcity is primarily a sustainable development challenge. While it may be one element contributing to conflict and instability in some particular circumstances, it does not necessarily represent a threat to international peace and security.

General Assembly resolution 1803 (XVII) declared that the right of peoples and nations to permanent sovereignty over their natural resources must be exercised in the interests of their national development and of the well-being of the people of the State concerned. Building on this legal right enjoyed by each Member State, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development recognized that, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, States have the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and development policies. These principles will have a key role to play in the universal implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 6, on water and sanitation.

The logic of cooperation, not coercion, should therefore guide efforts to ensure the just and efficient use of limited water resources. Agencies and initiatives such as United Nations-Water, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization Land and Water Division, the World Water Assessment Programme and the International Hydrological Programme of UNESCO are well placed to provide technical expertise to prevent and resolve issues concerning water resource management. The Peacebuilding Commission, its Support Office and Fund can also contribute to designing and supporting projects aimed at fostering peace and reconciliation through the fair allocation and ownership of, as well as access to, water resources at the national level.

Despite some misperceptions that transboundary water basins tend to engender hostility rather than collaborative solutions, water is mainly an untapped resource of fruitful cooperation. Nurturing the opportunities for cooperation in water management among all stakeholders can help build mutual respect, understanding and trust among countries, and maintain public health, food security and social, environmental and economic stability. It can also build sustainable peace.

As my delegation highlighted during the Arria Formula meeting on this subject in April, our regional experience illustrates the potential of cooperation concerning water resources. Brazil signed, in 1969, the Treaty of the River Plate Basin with four of its neighboring countries. Among other provisions, the Treaty established an Intergovernmental Coordinating Committee to promote joint projects in one of the world's largest river basins. Two of these are the Guarani aquifer and the waterway transport system of the River Plate basin. A decade later, in 1979, a landmark tripartite agreement among Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, regarding the hydroelectric power plants of Itaipu and Corpus Christi, ended a long-standing controversy and paved the way for deeper integration and cooperation in our region.

Likewise, Brazil created, along with Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela, the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization, which has made great strides in promoting cooperation and sustainable development in the Amazon basin. These experiences and other regional initiatives bear witness to the potential of coordinated water management as an instrument to prevent and resolve disputes, as well as a catalyst for prosperity.

Rather than treat access to water resources as a threat to international, peace and security, our focus should be on addressing serious violations of international humanitarian law regarding water, particularly the issue of attacks on water installations in armed conflicts. It is of utmost importance that all parties to conflict abide by their obligations not to attack, destroy, remove or render useless drinking water supplies and irrigation works, as expressly stipulated in Additional Protocols I and II to the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

The securitization of sustainable development issues is detrimental to the functioning of the Council itself. This tendency detracts attention from the issues on which the Council can and is mandated to make a difference, namely, the protracted and more recent conflicts that have resulted in the direst humanitarian situation since the end of the Second World War.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): Let me express our deep appreciation for your leadership, Sir, in driving the water, peace and security agenda, both in the Security Council and in other forums. Building on the Arria Formula meeting you hosted in April, today's meeting provides us with a very welcome opportunity to consider the impact of water on peace and security.

Water impacts every major strand of life, from agriculture and energy to transportation and health care. The world is experiencing a surge of water-related crises, and the World Economic Forum rated water crises as the top global risk for the next 10 years. A rapidly growing global population and a changing climate threaten to skew the dynamics of supply and demand of the single-most important resource we have, and in ways we have never faced before. Two-thirds of the world's population could be living in water-stressed conditions by 2025.

Water scarcity affects security and strikes disproportionately at the most vulnerable and the poorest. It particularly affects security in fragile settings where governance may be weak and institutional capacity to deal with crises is low. We witness this in places such as in the Sahel region and around Lake Chad, where drought, land degradation and desertification lead to resource scarcity and food insecurity, generating conditions that risk leading to competition, tension and conflict.

Against the increasing threat that a lack of access to water can fuel conflict and threaten peace, Sweden has made efforts to build experience in what we call water diplomacy. The Stockholm International Water Institute manages the Shared Waters Partnership, which facilitates transboundary water management. We are also host of the UNESCO International Centre for Water Cooperation, which supports policy makers and other practitioners in reducing conflict around water.

Our work on water diplomacy has shown that while the threat of violence over water is real, water also offers opportunities as a source of cooperation. There are examples where water has even become a driver of conflict resolution. Most of the world's freshwater resources come from rivers, lakes and aquifers that are transboundary by nature. While that is a challenge, research on transboundary water management demonstrates the many cases where States tend to collaborate rather than enter into violent disputes over shared waters. I think your country, Mr. President, provides a very good example of reaching out to one's neighbours to work constructively, as stated earlier by the Secretary-General.

Cooperation over shared waters can have a far-reaching positive impact and build trust far beyond the issue of managing a shared resource. Institutionalizing mechanisms for cooperation over shared water is a long-term strategy for sustaining peace and a smart investment in times of increasing pressures from population growth, urbanization and climate change.

But to turn water into an opportunity for cooperation, we need transparent and efficient mechanism for information-sharing, participation and dispute settlement. We need smarter and more integrated water-management approaches. We need to break down silos and put new incentives in place. We need to be more creative in the use of technology. And we need stronger partnerships.

Today's debate is another reminder of the strong links between security and development. The implementation of Agenda 2030 is also crucial in preventing conflict. The importance of water for sustainable development is highlighted in several of our common goals, not least in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6, on water, and SDG 14, on oceans and seas. Sweden is a strong proponent of the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of SDG 14, which will take place here in New York in June 2017, to be co-hosted by the Governments of Fiji and Sweden.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): I would like to convey my delegation's appreciation to you, Mr. President, for taking the initiative during your presidency to organize this open debate on water, peace and security. We also thank your delegation for the useful concept note (S/2016/969, annex). I would also like to acknowledge the insightful remarks made earlier by the Secretary-General and other briefers.

Water is a resource that is limited supply but for which demand continues to grow. On the one hand, global warming continues to threaten the supply of fresh water, while, on the other, the steady increase in the global population is continually escalating the demand for water. It is therefore not difficult to see where our next existential challenge will come from. But meeting that challenge is not just about addressing questions of supply and demand; more fundamentally, it is a challenge of sharing the resource.

As water scarcity worsens with the world's growing population, there will be an increased need for sharing the available source of fresh water. However, the question of access to water is not just related to our survival; it is intricately related to food security and

to development. Asian and African States, in particular sub-Saharan States, all are witnessing growth in population, extreme vulnerability to climate change and an ever-increasing hunger for development. Therefore, the countries of those regions are likely to be the first to face the challenge of sharing transboundary waters in a pressing way. In the face of water scarcity, the ability of countries to cooperate and peaceably share available water resources will be critical to their peace, security and development. What is alarming, however, is that the regions most likely to be affected by acute water scarcity are the ones facing political turmoil and conflicts, some of which have remained unresolved for decades.

Throughout history, access to water has either been a source of conflict or of cooperation among people. Today, too, water scarcity can lead to either of the two paths. Essential for human survival — as, indeed, for progress — countries will be prepared to fight for access to adequate water. Only the will and ability of States to develop mutual understanding on the sharing of transboundary waters can prevent violence and conflict. Therefore, if we at the United Nations wish to maintain international peace and security, we must strive to find ways to ensure two things: one, that Member States remain willing to share water resources peaceably and cooperatively; and, two, that Member States' willingness to resolve such issues are not constrained by any lack of capacity.

The first of those aspects is often more critical. The international community must assume responsibility to develop, nurture and protect normative frameworks at the multilateral and bilateral levels to ensure that States remain willing to resolve water issues cooperatively. It must promote bilateral and regional agreements on waterways and, once they are developed, ensure that they are not undermined through unilateral or coercive measures. The Indus Water Treaty of 1960 — between Pakistan and India and with the World Bank as guarantor — is an example and model of what can be achieved through bilateral agreements. The Secretary-General also cited it earlier as an example of positive cooperation. But the Treaty is also an equally good case study of what could go wrong if such agreements are not honoured or if they are threatened by one of the States parties to be abrogated altogether. The international community must remain vigilant to any sign of unwillingness to maintain cooperation and must be willing act to avert any conflict.

On the second aspect, Member States' ability to cooperate depends upon a number of factors, which may be technical, financial or political. There are several international institutions that can address the technical or financial needs for developing and sustaining cooperation on water sharing among States. However, the only international body that can enhance Member States' political ability to cooperate is the Security Council. It is the responsibility of the Council to resolve international conflicts and disputes, especially long-standing, prolonged conflicts, in particular in Asia and Africa. Unburdened by conflicts of the past, new challenges can almost always be addressed cooperatively.

Before I conclude, I want to caution and warn against any use of water as an instrument of war. Pakistan denounces any such practice, real or threatened, as we believe it to be inconsistent with the precepts of international humanitarian law. Access to water is a fundamental right that must be protected at all times.

Finally, our debate today must send a strong message to the world that we are committed to maintaining cooperation in the face of water scarcity; that we will respect and protect our existing understandings and build where they are yet to be reached; and that we will not allow this challenge to put international peace and security at risk.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to you and your delegation, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and for circulating the concept note (S/2016/969, annex). I would also like to express my gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Strategic Foresight Group for their inputs at this debate.

Water is a natural resource that not only has a determining impact on the wealth and welfare of all nations, but also holds major sway over their stability in the twenty-first century. Approximately 1.7 billion people currently lack fresh water and are below the threshold of true scarcity established by the United Nations. That number is expected to increase to 2.4 billion in 2025.

More than 260 rivers are shared in one way or another by 148 countries, and therefore water-related issues can affect regional peace in a very significant way. It is particularly disturbing that there are no cooperation frameworks for 158 of the 263 international watercourses. Incremental competition between States over transboundary water resources has led to regional instability in many places, and that will continue and become exacerbated in the future.

With unprecedented population growth, new emerging economies and the effects of climate change, pressures on our finite freshwater resources are increasing. Meanwhile, the ability of some nations to secure their water-related requirements is being severely challenged, thus causing great and legitimate concern that tensions around water hotspots will intensify among water users. Yet water holds immense potential for cooperation, which should be explored and utilized. An increasingly strong and coordinated response is therefore expected from the international community in order to raise awareness and build cooperation on the growing challenges for sovereign States posed by water.

Water and water resources are increasingly becoming a matter of national security, and therefore, as the concept note (S/2016/969, annex) describes, a potential driver for conflicts. Fierce competition for fresh water may well become a source of conflict in the future, in the same way that land and energy have led to conflicts in the past — if the international community fails to install efficient and effective water management structures at the regional level. As stated in the 2015 *World Water Development Report*,

> "[i]nter-state and regional conflicts may also emerge due to water scarcity and poor management structures."

Water diplomacy is needed — a new approach to managing complex water issues and networks, innovative approaches to water managing that should replace outdated zero-sum battles over water. That new approach would serve to promote both short- and longer-term cooperation through shared benefits, inclusive multi-stakeholder agreements and sustainable transboundary institution-building.

To meet those challenges, the international community needs to accentuate its political will to promote transboundary water cooperation by negotiating, designing, agreeing and implementing custom-made and appropriate water-sharing plans and access to water. We need to encourage countries that are facing water-related issues to develop cooperation frameworks to address their respective needs in order to prevent water-related confrontations in the future. Upon request by the States concerned, the relevant bodies of the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations can also play a useful role in those efforts, particularly in the areas of capacity-building, sharing experiences and setting models.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Mr. Morales López (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank Senegal for convening this open debate on water, peace and security and for the concept note (S/2016/969, annex) shared with us. We are also grateful for the briefings by Mr. Danilo Türk, Ms. Christine Beerli and Mr. Sundeep Waslekar.

Less than 3 per cent of global water is fresh water. Of that 3 per cent, more than 2.5 per cent is frozen water in Antarctica, the Arctic and in glaciers, making it practically unavailable. That is, humankind depends on the remaining .5 per cent of fresh water for its needs and for the world's ecosystems.

As the concept note mentions, water resources are not uniformly distributed throughout the world. Even when we carefully consider the natural water supply within countries with significant water resources, it becomes evident that local distribution is also not homogenous — in some areas water is abundant and in others the resource is scarce.

We know that most of the .5 per cent of fresh water is stored in underground aquifers. However, increasing use for farming, industry and consumption reduces the available global reserves. Agriculture — the primary sector for ensuring food security, and therefore sustainable development — is estimated to account for 75 per cent of global freshwater consumption. Industry is responsible for 20 per cent, while only 5 per cent is used for domestic purposes. In that context, cooperation is critical to ensuring a sufficient supply of potable water for all sectors, as a catalyst for sustainable development.

Colombia is rich in water resources due to its geographic location, topography and great variety of climate patterns. Grounded in that reality, our country has recognized the importance not only of the need for comprehensive management of the resource but also of

the prevention, recognition and management of water-related conflicts.

My country's efforts are reflected in the national policy for integrated water resources management and in its national water plan, which includes six objectives: to conserve the ecosystems and hydrological processes on which the country's water supply depends; to identify, quantify and optimize water demand in the country; to improve the quality and minimize the pollution of water resources; to develop comprehensive management on the risks associated with the supply and availability of water; to create the conditions for institutional capacity-building in the comprehensive management of water resources; and, finally, to consolidate and bolster governance for its comprehensive management.

Key to those objectives is a strategy for managing conflicts that emerge regarding the use, access and affordability of water. In that regard, our national water plan prioritizes a programme for the management of water-related conflicts that seeks to reinforce the governance strategy set out in the national policy.

In addition, Colombia wishes to emphasize that the Congress of the Republic is considering draft legislation that seeks to make the right to water a constitutional human right. As of today, six of the eight debates required for legislative approval have been held. It is clear that the work being done internally is in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals and reflects Colombia's commitment to them, particularly Goal 6: "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all".

For Colombia, it is essential that the issue of water on the international agenda be considered in the context of cooperation and dialogue among countries, which will benefit all countries, their populations and ecosystems. That perspective allows us to foresee the emergence of conflicts arising from the supply, conservation, use or exploitation of water. However, given the current proliferation of international water-related initiatives, Colombia emphasizes the importance of taking into account the need for comprehensive and pragmatic approaches within the United Nations system to address existing water-related issues and avoid duplicating efforts.

While the issue of water is not within the purview of the Security Council, the United Nations and regional bodies play a key role through which it can participate as a catalyst of international cooperation through technical and scientific exchanges that promote sustainable water use. States, for their part, are called upon to make good-faith efforts to promote dialogue and mechanisms of cooperation such as those presented today in order to preserve the resource for future generations and to ensure that its use is shaped by sustainable patterns of production and consumption.

In that regard, Colombia wishes to reiterate the importance it attaches to the work of the Security Council. Nevertheless, it believes that the more appropriate body to engage in water-related debates is the General Assembly. Considering the functions and aims of the Assembly and the intrinsic relationship between water and sustainable development, it is our view that water-related discussions should be held in that universal organ, thereby ensuring an inclusive and comprehensive approach with the participation of all Member States. It is imperative that we strengthen cooperation among States and help developing countries, upon their request, to find responses and solutions that will enable them build capacities in order to prevent water-related conflicts.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Hungary.

Ms. Bogyay (Hungary): Let me first commend the Senegalese presidency for including this very important topic on the agenda of the Security Council.

Hungary aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by observer of the European Union.

When speaking about water security and cooperation, I always refer to the striking conclusion of a Hungarian-born Nobel laureate physicist, the inventor of the hologram, Dénes Gábor, who said,

> "Until today man has fought nature; from now on man has to fight his own nature."

What makes that statement so relevant in the context of this debate is that the challenges related to the sustainable management of our freshwater resources, as well as the looming water crisis, are, to a large extent, man-made. Interdependence will only increase over time, as regions and sectors exposed to water shortages rely more and more on water controlled by others and face dramatically changing climatic conditions and challenges that contribute to the growing water scarcity.

Many consider water as a driver of conflict, but, even more important, I think that it should be a source

of cooperation. While more than 140 water-related treaties have been signed in this century, datasets show that only about seven minor skirmishes over water occurred during the same period. War over water is not strategically rational, hydrogeographically effective or economically viable. Until today, water cooperation has prevailed over water conflicts.

Hungary has developed a strong tradition of prudent water management over the centuries. It also provides technical assistance to developing nations. Given the hydrogeological conditions of the country, transboundary water cooperation is an unquestionable imperative for Hungary.

We encourage all Member States to join the relevant United Nations conventions on water. To avoid mismanagement, distrust and eventually conflict, the establishment of coordination mechanisms among countries at the level of transboundary river basins or aquifers is an absolute necessity. Transboundary cooperation hinges on political will and on understanding what the issues are. The cooperation required for data-sharing over transboundary river basins and aquifers is very important.

Since 2003, the Budapest World Science Forum, organized by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and UNESCO, has put water cooperation on the front line of its deliberations. Water diplomacy is a major issue for us. In just a couple of days, we will hold the second Budapest Water Summit, under the patronage of His Excellency the President of Hungary, who is a member of the joint United Nations-World Bank High-Level Panel on Water. We believe that the Budapest Summit meeting next week will give momentum to the implementation of the water-related agenda arising from the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The aim of the Summit is to promote the message to all countries that facilitating the development of sustainable water resources should be a source of cooperation and of peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union. In addition, we fully support the statement by the representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, in the light of our cooperation on the upcoming split mandate in the Security Council.

I wish to congratulate Senegal on the open-minded choice of topic for today's debate, with emphaiss on the linkages between climate and security.

Water scarcity can be a threat — a multiplier of instability, a driver of migration and confrontation. That is why international cooperation is an essential tool for peacebuilding, preventing conflicts related to resource scarcity and minimizing threats through preventive diplomacy, mediation and capacity-building. The International Freshwater Treaties Database lists more than 400 water agreements, more than a quarter of which have been concluded in the past 70 years. They are the alternative to confrontation.

Italy is party to the so-called Water Convention — the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes — which has played a key role in preventing potential conflicts in the pan-European region following the end of the Soviet Union. It has also proved instrumental in many post-conflict situations — for example, after the conflict in the former Yugoslavia.

The Convention's institutional framework has promoted cooperation based on equity and sustainability, and thus has promoted peace and economic integration. The opening of the Convention to all States Members of the United Nations as of 1 March offers the opportunity to create the global multilateral framework for promoting water cooperation, monitoring progress, identifying hotspots and triggering preventive responses. It can offer a home in the United Nations system for multilateral diplomacy on peace, security and water.

Italy believes that education, research and cooperation, with the transfer of know-how, in sustainable water management are key to our efforts in conflict prevention. For that purpose, Italy has invested in specialized courses for engineers, agronomists and water managers, while promoting an integrated approach within the water-energy-food security nexus at the Agronomic Institute of Florence, as well as by promoting postgraduate programmes at the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute in Bari. Together with the increasing number of graduate students from sub-Saharan Africa, the Mediterranean and the Middle East, who are now addressing the competing uses of scarce water in their respective countries, Italian cooperation continues its long-standing engagement in local projects for conservation and the sustainable use of

water with a focus on rural areas in the Mediterranean, the Near East, Africa and Latin America.

History reminds us that advanced water management can contribute to the development and resilience of societies, as the Roman Empire proved in the Mediterranean, an area of water stress and climate variability. Two millenniums later, we cannot fail to recognize and address the root causes of conflicts and the challenges that climate change, unprecedented urbanization, population growth and migration pose to the stability and security of the world. That situation, which is particularly evident in Africa, calls for increased international collaboration. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development offers an appropriate framework where economic growth, social sustainability, environmental preservation and peace and security are connected and mutually beneficial. We should not miss the opportunity of adopting that new conceptual paradigm.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

Mr. Skinner-Klée (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): First and foremost, we would like to thank you, Sir, for organizing today's important debate and for the concept note (S/2016/969, annex). I also thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Danilo Türk, Ms. Christine Beerli and Mr. Sundeep Waslekar for their briefings.

Our delegation believes that a discussion on water, peace and security is important, since that natural resource is essential for humankind's survival, but also, because of its scarcity and people's dependence on it, it could be the fundamental cause of the outbreak of conflicts. Guatemala shares the concern that water could be viewed as a cause of conflict, which could occur because of its uneven global distribution and its ongoing scarcity caused by urbanization, global warming and the excessive or disproportionate use of water. That is why we must be careful and sensible in the use and conservation of water, especially given the expected global population increase in the not-too-distant future. That is why we agree with the remarks by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who said that

> "competition for fresh water may well become a source of conflict and wars in the future, but at the same time it has the potential to be a catalyst for development and cooperation."

Our strong commitment to multilateralism is based on the conviction that global challenges such as the maintenance of international peace and security, the fight against poverty, the promotion of sustainable development and the rule of law can be effectively addressed only within a multilateral framework based on the premise of cooperation and solidarity. Without that, the arbitrary and illogical use of resources will lead not only to shortages but to clashes between peoples and nations in an attempt to gain access to those resources.

Environmental protection and appropriate management of our natural resources will enable us to achieve harmonious human coexistence, marked by development and sustainability and guided by conservation and sustainable use. We need to prepare a strategic rapid response focused on the underlying structural issues related to the problem of water resources, which requires not only a change in rhetoric but also a substantial change in the way we see and understand the reality that determines the conservation of, access to and use of water.

For Guatemala, it is particularly worrying that for various reasons, and to a great extent man-made ones, the world's populations are currently encountering a serious shortage of fresh water owing to the unsustainable use, poor management and pollution of water, as well as to climate change, industrialization, rapid demographic growth and the reappropriation of water, all of which add up to a greater demand for the resource, which could lead to confrontation among communities, peoples and nations.

Under those circumstances, it is unnecessary and pointless to emphasize that, unless we change the conditions under which we are currently using that resource, the improper use or lack of access to water will generate still more structural violence in various regions, putting at risk development and the implementation of the economic, social and cultural rights of populations, as well as international peace and security. That is why we condemn attacks against water supplies as a method of waging war, whether of a national or international nature, since that is a clear violation of international law and international humanitarian law. Indeed, to use water as an instrument of war is a crime against humanity, which is why the relationship between water and peace deserves to be analysed with reference to current practices and with

a view to coordinating policies on conservation and sustainable use.

In that regard, we recognize the timeliness of this debate in the interest of highlighting the problem of water and its supply, which deserves greater attention from the international community. That is why we welcome with pleasure the efforts undertaken by the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace to address the development of proposals for strengthening the global architecture for the prevention and resolution of conflicts related to water, as well as their work to enhance the relevance of water-related issues in local, regional and international policies with a view conserving that vital resource for future generations.

The Security Council has the paramount responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. In order to achieve that, it has been recognized that it is essential to count on a set of mechanisms and tools applicable to the situations and local circumstances of the populations involved. In most cases, those tools have been used to react to conflicts rather than to prevent them. However, we believe that it is necessary to ensure that all instruments at the Security Council's disposal should be used in an appropriate way to deal with the various issues involved in order to achieve sustainable peace and, of course, conflict prevention.

Finally, my delegation considers it important to include this topic on the Council's agenda, while underscoring that water is a strategic resource that belongs to all humankind and has an impact on security, development and human rights. That is clear. We have at hand two important agendas, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the sustainable peace agenda. We can make use of and build on them together for a sustainable and harmonious future.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the of Slovenia.

Mr. Logar (Slovenia): Slovenia welcomes the organization of this debate and the opportunity to address the complex topic of the linkages between water, peace and security at the highest level. I commend Senegal for convening this meeting and for preparing the comprehensive concept note (S/2016/969, annex). I thank the Secretary-General and all three briefers for their relevant and instructive contributions today.

Water is our life support, and its impact on human development is undeniable. Yet the value and the strategic place of water in international politics have long been underestimated, as have the dangers of water scarcity for peace and security. Especially in the light of climate change, which directly impacts water cycles, we must adopt a different attitude and a more coherent approach to water management and the protection of that indispensable natural resource, which is key for the survival of our civilization and, indeed, our planet. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change represents an important landmark in the process, and I am pleased to announce that Slovenia recently ratified the Agreement.

Mobilizing political will is crucial for the protection of water resources, and we must act quickly. For that reason, Slovenia is one of the countries co-hosting the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, chaired by former Slovenian President, Mr. Danilo Türk, and Slovenia was pleased to co-host a side event on the topic during the recent general debate of the General Assembly. Moreover, we participate in Geneva at the Group of Friends of Water and Peace, where we look forward to new members joining the Group as a result of today's discussions. We would also like to encourage more extensive cooperation between the two Groups of Friends in Geneva and in New York, as well as cooperation with the various high-level panels working on water-related issues.

The Security Council has an important role to play in raising awareness of the importance of water for peace and security, and in preventing possible water-related conflicts. We therefore hope that this debate will contribute to further actions on water management, while reinforcing structural aspects of the connection between water and security.

Furthermore, I would like to stress the important role of regional organizations in contributing to peaceful and sustainable water management across national borders. In addition, we must create inclusive water partnerships. Those partnerships should involve a range of actors, not just Governments but also civil society and the private sector. They should be fair and appropriately financed, with a view to leaving no one behind, and should encourage all those involved to choose cooperation instead of conflict.

There is no doubt that the sustainable management of water resources will become a major global challenge. But I would also like to highlight its potential to be transformed from a source of potential conflict into an instrument of peaceful cooperation. Slovenia has

had very positive experience in that regard with the International Sava River Basin Commission, established by the four former Yugoslav States, as a result of one of the first international agreements concluded among the former Yugoslav States after peace was achieved following the Balkan wars. As a result, the Sava River became a symbol of regional cooperation, and the agreement has had an important regional stabilizing effect. I am also proud to inform the Council that just a week ago the Slovenian National Assembly enshrined the right to safe drinking water in our Constitution. Furthermore, the sector-specific priorities of Slovenia's development cooperation include a special focus on sustainable water management and access to safe drinking water.

Safeguarding water means safeguarding our planet for ourselves and for generations to come. We must spare no effort to find comprehensive solutions to water-related challenges, while taking into account the close links with climate change, food security, energy and other issues. The higher our awareness of the importance of water cooperation, the easier it will be to achieve the goal of the sustainable use of water for all, which will, in turn, contribute to the maintenance of peace and security.

Slovenia remains committed to supporting the nexus between water, peace and security. In that light, our country is eagerly looking forward to the final report of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace and its recommendations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Sandoval Mendiolea (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico would like to thank Senegal for convening this debate on one of the primary emerging challenges to development and global stability, as well as to sustainable peace. We acknowledge the statements delivered by the Secretary-General and the other briefers.

First, I shall make some brief comments on behalf of the High-Level Panel on Water, which was established by the United Nations and the World Bank Group and is composed of 11 members and a special adviser. The Panel is co-chaired by the Presidents of Mauritius and Mexico.

The Panel on Water seeks a fundamental change in the way in which the world deals with the issue of water in order to prioritize it as humankind's most important resource and to mobilize effective action to ensure its availability and sustainable management for the benefit of our peoples, based on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and on Sustainable Development Goal 6 in particular. It is for that reason that we believe that water should be at the centre of our discussions when we talk about matters such as social and economic development, peace and security, the protection of the environment or adapting to climate change.

Last September, the Panel launched an action plan, together with the Secretary-General and the President of the World Bank Group, that recognizes that access to safe drinking water is a human right. The plan also acknowledges the need to shoulder greater responsibilities in the face of local, national and international challenges through a comprehensive and coordinated approach. In that regard, our leaders have called for the consolidation of the current recommendations and research on water and peace in order to present a new initiative in January 2017.

If the world continues consuming at its current rate, by 2030 there will have been a 40 per cent reduction in current water reserves. If we manage to achieve the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals, we will create the necessary conditions for diminishing and eliminating conflicts over water through a preventive approach. Such an approach must also include transboundary basins, which are home to 40 per cent of the world's population but lack governance agreements in 60 per cent of the cases.

In its national capacity, Mexico reaffirms the need to protect that vital resource for the development of countries and for their inhabitants, thereby promoting sustainable peace. For Mexico, the foundations of sustainable peace lie in development, the fight against poverty and inequality, and access to justice and institutions as the most effective means of preventing conflicts and improving the quality of life.

The management and protection of water resources is a particularly pertinent issue in those areas where water has been a frequent source of conflict. It is important to develop the abilities to cooperate and mediate in resolving disputes related to water. The work of the relevant United Nations agencies and bodies on the ground, including the Peacebuilding Commission, must take into account the specific nature of this issue.

The management of water, especially when the resource needs to be shared between two or more countries, does not necessarily have to result in conflict. For over 120 years Mexico and the United States of America have developed an exemplary framework for bilateral cooperation through a binational body, the International Boundary and Water Commission, which monitors the implementation of the 13 treaties on the matter, which both countries have signed. Collaboration and mutual understanding have allowed us to implement joint projects that have led to the improved well-being of some 12 million inhabitants of the border zone. That political will, expressed through understanding and cooperation, is what must prevail between neighbouring nations that share watercourses, borders, security and a future.

The success of the cooperation on our northern border has been replicated on our southern border, where two independent international commissions are in place. That has led to several decades of cooperation with our neighbours Guatemala and Belize on the governance of shared water basins and has also resulted in the strengthening of bilateral relations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Zaayman (South Africa): My delegation wishes to express its appreciation to Senegal for convening this important and timely debate on the important role played by water in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Conflict has cascading effects and far-reaching implications for water security, which lead to negative impacts on political situations and on the social, economic, and environmental aspects of sustainable development. The impact of water on conflict can be seen in Africa, particularly in those countries along the River Nile, as well as in the water-scarce parts of the Middle East. We therefore believe that water security must be one of the primary concerns that should be addressed in the aftermath of conflicts in order to restore livelihoods and revive economic and social development.

In global terms, indications suggest that, at the current rate, the overuse of fresh water relative to its supply will severely slow economic development. The lack of clean water will be the cause of massive food shortages and compromise energy output within the next 15 to 20 years.

Potential conflicts over water resources can pose an imminent threat to security, both globally and on the African continent, especially as people continue to seek better standards of living in the face of increasingly limited resources. That in turn will result in consequences such as greater flows of economic migrants seeking sustenance elsewhere.

That scenario is confirmed in the World Bank's recent report entitled *High and Dry: Climate Change, Water and the Economy*, which concludes that

> "in the next 35 years, water insecurity — made worse by climate change — could force migration, spark conflict and be a significant financial drag on regional governments".

Coming from a continent where water security remains such a high priority, I wish to stress the strong relevance of this issue to Africa. There is no doubt that the international community must strengthen its focus on the preservation of water, including by combating climate change. President Jacob Zuma is a member of the United Nations and World Bank High-Level Panel on Water in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Developmen and the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6, on clean water and sanitation.

The Panel, convened at the initiative of the Secretary-General and the President of the World Bank, recently called for a fundamental shift in the way the world looks at water and issued an action plan for a new approach to water management that will help the world to achieve the SDGs. Furthermore, the World Economic Forum, in its *Global Risks Report* in January, has identified the scarcity of water as the number-one long-term risk globally.

We should also work towards making the increase in competition for water become a catalyst for more intense cooperation and innovation rather than a source of conflict. Indeed, the challenges surrounding water can also be a path for dialogue, mediation and confidence-building between States. The work of the Department of Political Affairs in that regard is commended.

South Africa shares transboundary river basins with three other African countries. In that regard, achieving transboundary water security has assisted us and our neighbours in stimulating regional cooperation. Shared waters provide opportunities for cooperation

and support political development on wider issues such as sustainable development and economic integration.

The Southern African Development Community remains a prime example of such an approach, whereby the organization coordinates transboundary water cooperation on 15 basins across Southern Africa. We should also mention our strong belief that a country's water security is intrinsically linked to that of its neighbouring countries, and is the very cornerstone of regional integration and development.

For South Africa, as a constitutional, democratic State, inclusiveness and gender sensitivity have always been core principles of our national policy. Accelerating the empowerment of women in regional water management should therefore be viewed as critical, because women play an important part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water. The pivotal role of women as providers and users of water and as guardians of the living environment is seldom reflected in institutional arrangements for the development and management of water resources.

Water scarcity is a major threat to economic growth and stability around the world. Water is and will remain at the heart of international peace and security, the defence of human rights and the imperative for sustainable development paths. The African Union's Agenda 2063 development goals best articulate the demand that Africa has for water, as it states that,

> "Africa shall have equitable and sustainable use and management of water resources for socioeconomic development, regional cooperation and the environment."

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Thoms (Germany): I thank the Republic of Senegal for the invitation to this important discussion on the links between water, peace and security.

In recent years, the World Economic Forum's *Global Risks Report* has ranked water crises as among the global risks with the greatest impact and likelihood of occurring. Water scarcity is a cross-cutting issue that affects all spheres of human life: drinking water and nutrition, peace and security, sustainable development and economic growth. The International Organization for Migration estimates that by 2050 approximately 200 million environmental migrants will be forcibly displaced, temporarily or permanently, owing to floods, droughts, desertification or sea-level rise.

Despite those bleak forecasts, the often evoked "water wars" are not inevitable. We believe that transboundary water cooperation is the appropriate answer to achieving effective and lasting regional solutions for water disputes. Such cooperation must reflect the interests of all riparian countries and must be based on efficient and sustainable water use. There are several positive examples to prove that. In Europe, there is water cooperation in the Danube and the Rhine river basins. In Africa, there is water cooperation in the Lake Victoria basin and the Lake Chad basin. In the latter example, the riparian States strive to protect the dwindling Lake Chad and to ensure water security for the entire region, despite being afflicted by the terror of Boko Haram.

We are convinced that fostering and promoting transboundary water cooperation requires stable legal frameworks. At the global level, the United Nations Water Conventions of 1992 and 1997 provide valuable tools for transboundary cooperation, benefiting all of the riparian countries in a basin. We therefore encourage all countries to join those Conventions and make use of their experience and frameworks. At the regional level, the river-basin organizations are key for the implementation of the principles laid down in those two Conventions.

Finally, in order to prevent water from being used as a method of warfare, it is of the essence to strengthen the implementation of international humanitarian law. Let me mention in particular the 1977 Additional Protocols to the 1949 Geneva Conventions. The recent example of Da'esh and the Mosul dam has drastically shown the tangibility of such threats.

In order to be adequately prepared for mitigating the effects of looming water crises and their potential implications for peace and stability, as well as to ensure the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, we encourage all United Nations States Members to actively contribute to strengthening the United Nations water architecture.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations.

Monsignor Grysa: The Holy See is pleased that the Senegalese presidency has chosen this important

topic for an open debate in the Security Council, therefore increasing the attention paid to the issue by the international community.

Water scarcity illustrates a paradox. While water covers two thirds of the Earth's surface and is not used up when consumed, it is clear that the availability of fresh water is diminishing. With expanding deserts, deforestation and increasing droughts, everyone should be concerned about a potential worldwide calamity caused by a diminished water supply.

Water has always been scarce in some places, owing usually to geographical location. However, in other places it is scarce because of mismanagement and misallocation, which have caused waste and inequitable distribution. Environmental degradation makes water toxic, and climactic changes alter hydrologic cycles. Underground water sources in many places are threatened by the pollution produced in certain mining, farming and industrial activities, especially in countries that lack adequate regulations or controls. Industrial waste, detergents and chemical products continue to pour into our rivers, lakes and seas. Agricultural production, the greatest consumer of fresh water, and industries, the second-greatest consumer, demand more water than ever, depleting aquifers much faster than they can be replenished.

In many places, the demand for water exceeds the sustainable supply, with dramatic consequences for the short and long term, including implications for national, regional and international peace and security. Water poverty especially affects Africa, where large sectors of the population have no access to safe drinking water or experience droughts that impede agricultural production and provoke fierce competition. The migration of entire populations from regions that are experiencing drastic water scarcity is seen as a threat to populations in areas with water.

In brief, the implications of water for national, regional and international peace and security can hardly be overstated. Indeed, water experts and advocates ominously predict that the Third World War will be over water. When he visited the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 2014, Pope Francis said,

> "[w]ater is not free, as we so often think. It is a grave problem that can lead to war".

Water scarcity also has huge implications for justice and equity. As Pope Francis underlined in the encyclical *Laudato si'*, fresh drinking water is an issue of primary importance given its fundamental role in health and overall well-being. In that context, one particularly serious problem is the quality of water available to the poor. Every day, dangerous water-borne diseases, such as dysentery and cholera, remain a leading cause of death, especially among infants and children.

Moreover, a growing tendency to privatize water and turn it into a commodity dictated by market laws could seriously compromise access to safe water on the part of the poor, making it conceivable, as Pope Francis said,

> "that the control of water by large multinational businesses may become a major source of conflict in this century".

While good water management implies expenditures, as well as fees for water use to encourage its wise consumption, it is even more important to remember that access to safe potable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. Pope Francis affirmed that our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity.

Water-related challenges to peace and security, and indeed to life itself, must be considered not only as threats but also as opportunities for nations to collaborate more closely in efforts to come up with solutions, instead of engaging in ever-fiercer competition for a diminishing essential resource that could ultimately lead to wars and conflicts. New technologies continue to emerge that could enable us to avoid a sustainability crisis through, inter alia, better methods of food production that require less water and industrial manufacturing that minimizes pollution of our aquifers and water systems.

Moreover, local and traditional solutions to water-related challenges must not be abandoned in spite of technological advances. My delegation wishes to encourage both the public and private sectors to support community-driven initiatives for water conservation and water allocation. Local communities often know their own water systems better and how best to conserve and harness them. While the water shortage concerns vast areas, local solutions are always key components in coming to grips with the water problem.

Finally, education on the fundamental importance of water is crucial. Water continues to be wasted and polluted, not only in the developed world but also in developing countries that possess it in relative abundance. That shows that there is much to do in educating individuals and communities on issues such as water conservation, wise consumption and equitable use of this universal common good on the part of all. It is important to cultivate among peoples and their leaders a conscientious awareness that considers access to water a universal right of all human beings, without distinction or discrimination. The water challenges that are provoking peace and security threats are technical, economical, political and social, but let us not forget that ultimately they are ethical and moral issues as well.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Poland.

Mr. Winid (Poland): Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, and your dedicated team on the organization of today's debate on water, peace and security and on the outstanding concept note (S/2016/969, annex) prepared by Senegal to guide our discussion. We fully agree with your assessment that water is a fundamental pillar of development and security policy and of great relevance in national, regional and global policymaking. Poland is impressed with the enormous efforts of the Senegalese Government to facilitate access to water for its citizens.

While Poland aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union, allow me to make some additional points in my national capacity.

The President mentioned in his concept note an interesting fact: that out of 263 international watercourses, 158 still have no cooperation framework. As a country actively engaged in various international and regional mechanisms dedicated to water cooperation and water resource management, Poland is ready to share its experience and best practices in that area.

We are a member of the Council of the Baltic Sea States — an overall political forum for regional intergovernmental cooperation, made up of 11 countries and the European Commission. The Council constitutes an important platform for building trust, safety and security in the Baltic Sea region and serves as a platform for dialogue on a wide spectrum of areas — energy efficiency, migration, border control and human trafficking, to name a few. One of the conclusions of Poland's presidency in that organization, completed earlier this year, is that a prosperous, stable and secure Baltic Sea region represents a crucial component of the European security system.

We share the view expressed by some of the previous speakers that a peaceful solution to conflicts arising from competition between States over transboundary water is of the utmost importance. Poland is a State party to the main international treaties on watercourses, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Since 2005, Professor Stanislaw Pawlak, a Polish judge, has served in the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, which plays a major role in the global architecture to prevent and resolve water-related disputes.

Today's debate affords us an excellent opportunity to highlight the fundamental nexus between security and development, recognized also in various United Nations initiatives related to water. As a member of the United Nations Group of Friends of Oceans and Seas, Poland has strongly supported the establishment of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, devoted to the conservation, protection and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources. That Goal is crucial for countries, including small island developing States, with economies that are highly dependent on the use of oceans and seas.

Let me also draw the Council's attention to the 10X20 Initiative on Marine Protected Areas, launched earlier this year, which contributes specifically to the accomplishment of target 5 of SDG 14, aiming to conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas and biodiversity by the year 2020. Poland is one of the Vice-Chairs of the Steering Committee of the 10X20 Initiative, along our friends from Italy — the Chair — and the Bahamas, Kenya and Palau as Vice-Chairs.

Finally, we look forward to continuing the discussion on water-related issues and possible security implications of climate change within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. I have the honour of informing the Council that, following the decision adopted in Marrakesh, the twenty-fourth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will be held in Poland in 2018. The international community has entrusted Poland with the very responsible task for the fourth time, and we are very proud of that.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Akbaruddin (India): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate. We thank your delegation for preparing the useful concept note (S/2016/969, annex), and the briefers who have provided very interesting perspectives on the subject.

While the topic of today's discussion is water, peace and security, the importance that water has for humans far exceeds this perspective. Water sustains life on Earth. India's philosophical tradition, like many others, is replete with references to the centrality of water to human existence. The *Rig Veda*, an ancient Indian scripture, has an invocation:

> "Gracious be divine waters for our protection. Be there for our drink, and stream on us bliss and happiness. Sovereigns over precious things, and rulers over men, ye waters. We seek healing balm of you."

There are myriad ways in which societies have successfully harnessed water resources throughout human history. They have varied and evolved, and continue to do so. Today water has multiple uses, from drinking to sanitation, from growing food to industrial applications. Rivers and oceans are also pathways for navigation and trade within countries and across continents.

Access to fresh water and its longer-term availability have acquired importance in view of the rapid population growth and unsustainable practices of water use. Climate change and warming patterns alter water availability, thereby highlighting the need to better manage our water resources. The growing realization of the close linkages among water, food and energy is also focusing attention on the impact of those interlinkages on sustainable development.

Across the planet, nearly 1 billion people do not have access to adequate safe drinking water. Nearly 2.5 billion people lack access to basic sanitation. Waterborne diseases remain a concern. The Millennium Development Goals sought, and now the Sustainable Development Goals seek, to prioritize ways to address those concerns. Increasing attention is being paid to the blue economy and its sustainable uses.

There are several issues of policy that we are grappling with in the management of water as a resource. They range from issues relating to private versus community ownership of water, relative pricing of water for personal use, agricultural versus industrial use, allocation for survival versus luxury uses, treating water as a commodity versus as a right, developing mandatory standards for efficiency of water use and so on.

Recognizing the multiple facets of water in our lives and the need for wider cooperation, several United Nations agencies have been active on various aspects of issues relating to water. For instance, UNESCO initiated its International Hydrological Programme in 1995. Since 2003, UN-Water has been the inter-agency coordination mechanism for all fresh water and sanitation-related matters. The decade from 2005 to 2015 was declared the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life". The transboundary aspects of significant water bodies and the imperative for international cooperation in that regard have also been well acknowledged for a long time. Many multilateral environment agreements, such as the 1971 Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity and the 1994 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, facilitate such international cooperation. The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is of relevance in the context of offshore freshwater aquifers.

While wider acceptance of the 1997 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses has so far made limited progress, there have been a range of bilateral and regional treaties and arrangements promoting cooperation across upper and lower riparian States. The concept note points out that 200 treaties, on 60 international watercourses, have been signed in the past seven decades. Experience therefore shows that, while international cooperation is essential in cases dealing with the transboundary nature of bodies of water, each specific instance has its own unique characteristics. The countries concerned have found ways to cooperate in specific contexts in their collective interest.

India is both an upper and lower riparian State for a number of different rivers, and we are familiar with the issues involved in the cooperative management of transboundary river waters. The partition of India, in 1947, also partitioned rivers to the west and east. We have engaged with our neighbours in managing those shared waters. The landmark 1960 Indus Water Treaty was finalized several years before the 1966 Helsinki Rules on the Uses of the Waters of International Rivers for transboundary water-sharing. We are also involved in a series of other ongoing collaborative efforts with our neighbours to do with sharing waters.

Water impinges on every aspect of human survival, including human security. While the possibility of water-related conflicts cannot be ruled out, it is encouraging to note that the international community's overall experience in evolving specific, innovative, cooperative approaches to transboundary issues has been positive. In today's world, and with our current understanding of the interconnectivity and mutuality of our environmental challenges, we should aim to ensure that the key term in international discourse in this area is water as a driver of cooperation, instead of considering approaches that tend to turn water issues into security problems. The first path will engender genuine international collaboration; taking the second, on an issue as complex and cardinal to life as water, will only be doing an injustice to humankind as a whole.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Ms. Adamson.

Ms. Adamson (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

I would first like to commend Senegal, which has long been committed to advancing the discourse on water and peace, and thereby enabling us to work to change global perceptions about water. In the wake of the Arria Formula meeting held on the subject in April, today's debate is a new opportunity to take a closer look at the question of water as a potential vector for conflict, particularly when the geography of aquifer systems, lakes, rivers and watersheds does not follow State borders. But it is also an opportunity to reflect further on how to strengthen dialogue and cooperation in order to resolve and prevent water-related disputes and conflicts. Experience has shown that inadequate water management, growing demand, water stress, conflicts and natural disasters, and water insecurity exacerbated by climate change are sources of conflict both between and within States. Good water management is essential not only to economic and social development but also from the point of view of preventing and managing risks.

The European Union believes that preventing tensions and conflicts related to access to water must involve managing the effects of climate change, population growth, economic development, the various uses of water resources and water-related transborder challenges. Our collective recognition of water as a priority issue and its designation as a goal, in the form of Goal 6 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, represent a major step in that direction. Since then, the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace has been established, with an action plan proposing new investments and initiatives that can contribute to achieving Goal 6 on a global scale. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which entered into force on 4 November, was another key step, marking the success of multilateralism and our collective commitment to a transition to climate neutrality and adaptation to climate change. The Agreement could also have a significant positive impact on the security of water supplies and usage.

The European Union and its member States have been long and firmly committed to addressing water-related challenges around the world, including through our development assistance. Since 2007, in addition to bilateral aid from member States, we have allocated more than €2.2 billion to water and sanitation projects in more than 62 countries all over the world. Europe is a land where water resources are shared. Sixty per cent of its territory is located in transboundary basins, and it is that experience across the continent that is our guide in terms of collaboration and regional cooperation.

(*spoke in English*)

Part of that commitment is supporting initiatives of dialogue and cooperation aimed at reaching agreements that enable common, collaborative and sustainable management of the water resources shared by the various actors involved. It is legitimate for States to use their water resources for generating energy, but it is equally legitimate for downstream countries to demand a fair share for safe drinking water and the purposes of sanitation and irrigation.

Development cooperation programmes are supporting transboundary water management in several basins where the potential for conflict exists. They are also promoting an integrated approach within the water-energy-food-security nexus, addressing competing uses of scarce waters. Regional dialogues on

the nexus will be supported in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and in the European neighbourhood.

The European Union is also fully supportive of international agreements on water cooperation as a basis for collaborative, sustainable and rule-based solutions. We welcome the entry into force of the 1997 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses and encourage its implementation. We also welcome the global aspirations of the 1992 Economic Commission for Europe Water Convention, which has been able to accept the accession of any country in the world since March. Other relevant instruments and regional agreements that promote the sustainable management of transboundary river basins are also important. The European Union and its member States are very supportive of efforts to achieve the objectives of the availability and sustainable management of water for all and of integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation, as appropriate.

It has long been known that preventing conflicts is more efficient and effective than engaging with crises after they break out. With the recent adoption of the European Union Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy, we have committed to redoubling our efforts to prevent and monitor the root causes of conflicts, where resources stress — and climate change as a threat multiplier catalysing water and food insecurity — go hand in hand with human rights violations and inequality. Sustainable access to and use of water are essential to societal resilience and to stability and security around the world.

We will also keep working to address the direct and indirect international security impacts of climate change, including through climate-change risk assessments and support for capacity-building. In that context, the European Union looks forward to the Security Council continuing its work on climate change.

Senegal's concept note (S/2016/969, annex) also sheds light on the significance of the protection of water during armed conflict. By reaffirming the need to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law, human rights law and the laws on transboundary water resources, we may ensure better protection of water during armed conflict. That will contribute to strengthening the protection of that natural resource during times when it is most at risk.

Today's debate makes clear the importance of water for sustainable development and the preservation of peace. The European Union and its member States will maintain and strengthen their commitment to work with partners around the world on water diplomacy in support of those goals.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to congratulate the Senegalese presidency on its commitment to giving prominence to water diplomacy as an instrument of cooperation among States.

My statement is meant as a complement to the statement just delivered by the observer of the European Union.

First of all, I would like to underline what an excellent idea it is to have a Security Council debate on the topic of water, peace and security. As we consider this issue, we see that the links among the various elements are numerous. It is also important not to underestimate the role that water plays both as a potential source of conflict and as a potential element of cooperation. I would like, in that connection, to raise three points: first, the tools available to the Security Council on dealing with the subject; secondly, the specific case of the Sahel; and, thirdly, the situation of small island developing States.

First, looking at the tools that the Council has at its disposal, I would like to draw everyone's attention to the Peacebuilding Commission. Its advisory function should be used more actively. The link between security and development, which is at the core of the Commission's mandate, makes it an essential partner for ensuring that in post-conflict situations natural resources, including water, are put at the service of sustainable development. Belgium therefore urges the Council to agree that the advisory function of the Peacebuilding Commission should be fully used by the Council to deal with the issues on our agenda today. At the same time, the Peacebuilding Fund also offers opportunities. Belgium, which participates in financing the Fund, looks favourably on any Fund project that is devoted to the prevention or the resolution of issues relating to the sharing of or access to water.

Secondly, peacekeeping missions also have an important role to play. The mandates of certain missions,

such as the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, include elements that call on the missions to monitor the environmental impact of their activities. Those elements usually take the form of guidelines for water management. I think we can only welcome such developments, because experience has shown that the way in which water is managed by major United Nations Blue Helmet bases can have an impact on the drinking water resources and the sanitary services of the towns and villages surrounding the bases.

Finally, the experience of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia, which regularly reports on its activities to the Security Council, is worth mentioning. Its facilitation role to assist the Central Asian States in modernizing their existing legal framework in the area of the regional management of transboundary waterways is certainly rich in lessons to be shared with other United Nations entities, such as the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

With regard to the Sahel, on 26 May an open debate (see S/PV.7699) was held that underscored the direct impact of climate change and population growth on desertification and the availability of water in the region. The intensive use of water resources has contributed to the generation of security tensions, migratory flows, sanitary problems and declining agricultural yields. However, as the Senegalese presidency points out in the concept note (S/2016/969, annex) for this debate, as well as during the Arria Formula meeting on 22 April, there are encouraging examples of cooperation between the States in the region aimed at taking up the challenge of access to water resources. Those initiatives, in particular in the Gambia and Senegal River basins, should be welcomed and supported.

For its part, Belgium — as part of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which aims at promoting national and regional mechanisms for managing natural resources, in particular water — has developed projects on water management and sustainable agriculture in order to combat desertification in several countries of the region.

The third topic that I would like to focus on concerns small island developing States. That category of States, because of their particular physical, demographic and economic characteristics, faces complicated issues in the management of their freshwater supplies. Global warming has further aggravated the situation that those islands find themselves in. It has led to rising ocean levels, which causes saline infiltration that contaminates groundwater tables. The danger that threatens the very survival of those States should be recognized by the international community. Climate change must be countered in an effective way. Inaction would be disastrous for our planet.

In conclusion, I want to say that water, like other natural resources, is a crucial element for human development, but also, as a corollary, for international peace and security. Owing to the increasing link between water resources management and peace and security issues, the Security Council will in the future have to deal increasingly with issues related to that topic. Certainly, Belgium urges the Council, in keeping with its efforts aimed at sustaining peace, to become actively involved in the topic.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Bosah (Nigeria): Nigeria welcomes this opportunity to participate in today's open debate on water, peace and security. We commend the delegation of Senegal for its initiative in convening this debate and for the well-articulated concept note (S/2016/969, annex) to guide our discussion. Our appreciation also goes to the briefers for their useful insights.

As we hold today's debate, there is a palpable fear of the possibility of a global water crisis. The reason for that is not far-fetched. As populations grow and countries and societies modernize, the demand for water needed to produce food, energy and goods increases. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development estimates that by 2050 the world's demand for water will increase by 55 per cent. Competition between water users and nations demanding water resources is also predicted to escalate drastically.

Studies have shown that 60 per cent of the world's water reserves are domiciled in nine countries. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations has indicated that 33 countries across the world depend on other countries for over 50 per cent of their renewable water resources. Added to the scarcity of that vital resource are the challenges of population explosion, urbanization and climate change.

The growing scarcity of water is a potential source of conflict not only within countries but across

international boundaries. This compels the exploration of the best way to share this valuable commodity, which should constitute a fundamental feature of the global policy agenda. Averting potential conflicts stemming from water insecurity should be the thrust of our collaborative efforts in this regard.

We must recognize the imperative to sustain cooperation among nations on water security even in situations of political tension. Nigeria seizes the opportunity of this debate to commend the efforts made over the years to promote the peaceful resolution of water-related crises, including the more than 200 bilateral treaties concluded in this regard. We underscore the need for more efforts to bring about many more cooperation frameworks in managing water-sharing and access to water.

In the spirit of these efforts, Nigeria joined other West African nations in establishing the Niger Basin Authority. The Authority is one of the oldest African intergovernmental organizations, created to promote cooperation among member countries and especially to foster the integrated development of resources in the Niger River basin.

The Authority has worked to create an integrated development plan for the basin, especially focusing on cross-boundary projects. Drawing on water and hydroelectric resources, the Authority has harmonized the development of the energy, agriculture, forestry, transport, communications and industrial resources of member nations.

Nigeria has also, in conjunction with Cameroon, Chad and the Niger, established the Lake Chad Basin Commission. The mandate of the Commission is to sustainably and equitably manage Lake Chad and other shared water resources of the Lake Chad Basin Commission so as to preserve the ecosystems of the Lake Chad environmental basin, and to promote regional integration and peace and security across the basin. Efforts are currently being made to regenerate the lake to sustain the inhabitants of the Lake Chad basin and for the entrenchment of peace and security.

While encouraging States to enter into cooperation agreements to share common water resources as appropriate, I wish to underscore that according to applicable human rights law, water is a component of the right to an adequate standard of living. Therefore there is a need for States to guarantee the provision of this resource in all circumstances.

Consistent with the foregoing, and in accordance with the Geneva Conventions, all objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, including water installations, must enjoy special protection. We therefore call on all concerned to respect these principles at all times and in all circumstances.

In closing, we are convinced that to avoid water-related conflicts, there is a need for the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and Member States as well as regional organizations dealing with water issues, particularly in the area of capacity-building. Member States must all also deeply reflect on how best to protect water resources during armed conflict by reaffirming the need to respect international humanitarian law.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Laassel (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I should like first and foremost to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the excellent timing of the choice of topic for this morning's debate, which is taking place just a few days after the closing of the twenty-second Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 22) and the adoption of the Marrakech Action Proclamation.

For two weeks, the States Members of the United Nations had the opportunity to discuss, inter alia, the issue of water, one of the natural resources most affected by climate change and the repercussions of whose use go beyond ecosystem disruption to become a sources of conflict in societies.

Consensus on this issue has been established on the fact that, inter alia, water and sanitation are key to the achievement of many of the Sustainable Development Goals and are inextricably linked to climate change, agriculture, food security, health, energy, education, and, above all, to international peace and security.

For the first time in the history of the COP process, an Action Day for Water was held in Marrakech, a day that was devoted entirely to drawing attention to the water sector and to providing solutions for the implementation of the Paris agreement. The goal is to ensure the central place of the issue of water not only in climate negotiations but also through civil-society action and private-sector engagement.

The Action Day for Water made it possible to launch an initiative on water for Africa, which was

rolled out by Morocco with the support of the African Development Bank, with the foal of resolving the problem of climate justice throughout the continent by mobilizing international political, financial and institutional partners to improve water-service supply in Africa.

Water scarcity and water stress due to climate change are harbingers of conflict and suffering, in particular in Africa. According to the United Nations, by 2025 25 African countries will likely suffer from water shortages and or stress. In the Mediterranean region, 20 million persons currently lack access to safe drinking water, particularly in the countries of the south and the east, and 80 million inhabitants of the Mediterranean will experience water scarcity by 2025.

On a global scale, we are expecting a 40 per cent shortfall in water supply by 2030, and by 2050, the demand for water is estimated to have increased by 55 per cent. This reduction in available resources goes hand in hand with strong spatial inequalities at all levels. Entire regions of the planet are faced with water stress, and, conversely, some 10 States share 60 per cent of available water resources.

Tensions can be exacerbated when rivers constitute borders between States; in those instances where two States have to share a single water resource; and whenever an increase in the use of water drawn from a single source or from resources available in a given region comes into play.

Moreover, the use of subterranean water resources could trigger additional theatres for water conflict in the near future. These are glaringly unnerving projections that mean that we have a shared responsibility to address water-related tensions at this, the dawn of the third millennium.

The spectre of future water-related wars is regularly raised by the media and certain politicians, for good or for ill. But in reality, historians agree that there are very few examples of wars that were directly triggered by water. Rather than being a source of conflict in the majority of cases, water seems to have been but one element thereof; in some cases it can be a pretext for conflict, but more often it is the result of a tipping point being reached in a buildup of historical resentment or is due to geographical factors.

Nonetheless, we cannot but acknowledge that water can be used as a method of pressure and a tool of war during conflict. The history of humanity is replete with examples of this in all regions of the world, where water is a tool or a target in times of conflict. This is all the more true when water-supply systems are modern and connected to electric-supply networks, thus enhancing their vulnerability in times of conflict as they become a principal target. Water, which is often seen as the source of many conflicts in water-conflict areas, could also become a promoter of peace, thanks to the evolution of technology, an increased willingness to preserve our water resources and the establishment of international jurisdictions.

Managing and reconciling water affairs in an equitable and sustainable way and working to turn interdependence into cooperation and mutual advantages is intrinsically linked to the proper governance of water both within countries and at the international level. Here I would note that the two Additional Protocols of 1977 to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which prohibit attacking, destroying or removing goods vital to the survival of the civilian population, such as drinking-water facilities and reserves and irrigation structures, represent considerable progress. However, these two Protocols have not been ratified by all States, and new forms of conflict are not yet enshrined in international humanitarian law. Apart from the rather feeble role of the International Criminal Court, there is no effective international institution in terms of the implementation of the provisions of the Protocols.

Another challenge lies in working on the ground through innovative technical solutions. Increasing availability when supply is inadequate can involve the long-distance transfer of water, even if very costly. Alternative techniques can be explored, such as those aimed at conserving water, including improved management so as to increase the effectiveness of the resource's use in various areas. Moreover, we should take action with regard to demand and not only supply. That involves reducing waste and misuse and improving the efficiency of the use of water.

Improving international cooperation in managing tensions and conflicts over sharing water resources will necessarily entail strengthening capacities for regional dialogue. Cooperation among States on water makes it possible to establish a climate of trust and lay the foundation for cooperation in other areas. As illustrated by numerous examples, water can therefore become a catalyst for independence and cooperation.

On the occasion of COP 22, Morocco and Senegal organized a meeting that brought together 50 African ministers and sought to reach an agreement among African countries regarding concrete measures to confront the principal security threats posed by climate change, including the decrease in water availability. To that end, the Marrakech proclamation seeks to achieve sustainability, stability and security in Africa and calls for a "3S task force" to ensure that member States work towards preventing the dangerous effects of climate change on unstable and fragile areas. It also calls upon the African Union, its regional economic communities and all the relevant supranational institutions to secure natural resources and ensure sustainable and safe means of subsistence. It is that kind of interregional cooperation initiative that should be encouraged and duplicated for the well-being of Africa and all humankind.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Ms. Khaled (Bangladesh): We thank the Senegalese presidency for convening this open debate. We also thank the briefers for sharing their insights and recommendations.

As a finite resource of the global commons, water is fundamental to the three pillars of United Nations work on development, human rights, and peace and security. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has articulated the interlinkages between water and wider sustainable development. Water resources, and the essential services they provide, are among the keys to achieving poverty reduction, inclusive growth and food, health and energy security.

Nearly 750 million people around the world continue to lack access to an improved source of drinking water. Access to safe drinking water and sanitation are therefore duly recognized as human rights. The sustainable use and management of water are vital for promoting the dignity and well-being of all humankind. The interface between water and international peace and security is becoming increasingly self-evident. A number of conflict situations around the world can be directly or indirectly linked to some form of water scarcity or water-related natural disasters, in conjunction with other factors.

As stated in the concept note (S/2016/969, annex) for this debate, water-related issues among countries can often aggravate the sense of insecurity and act as a potential trigger for inter-State or regional conflicts. The Water Cooperation Quotient, developed by the Strategic Foresight Group, makes an interesting case about the lack of institutional cooperation in shared river basins as an underlying cause for conflicts in different parts of the world. There are a number of instances in which effective dialogue and cooperation among the States concerned in shared-basin areas have helped prevent, avert or diminish the chances of conflicts. In other instances, investment in water-intensive technologies and innovations, including through international partnerships, has effectively mitigated the potential drivers of conflict.

In terms of conflict resolution, water may need to be factored in as an essential component of sustaining peace and peacebuilding in certain contexts. It might be relevant for the Peacebuilding Commission to consider, as part of its thematic discussions, the role of water in promoting a comprehensive approach to sustaining peace.

The particular needs of the most vulnerable, including women and children, need to be mainstreamed into our various approaches and analyses. In many parts of the world, women and children must be freed from the burden of fetching water on a daily basis so as to open up enhanced opportunities for their empowerment and education.

In that connection, water must be seen as an integral part of the international development architecture, with focus on meaningful global partnership in achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6. The need to mobilize enhanced resources and expertise for water-related infrastructure and services should continue to feature prominently in the United Nations development discourse. We reiterate the call made by our Prime Minister at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Marrakech earlier this month to establish a global fund on SDG 6 to support, inter alia, water-related research, innovation and technology transfer.

The protection of water-related critical infrastructure and essential services during armed conflicts also deserves the international community's priority attention. The severe impact of breakdowns in water-related services and of restrictions in access to water in certain conflict situations continues to increase the vulnerability of civilian populations. The relevant international humanitarian law provisions stipulated in the 1977 Protocols Additional to the

Geneva Conventions of 1949 should provide guarantees against indiscriminate attacks on or restriction to water resources and installations by various parties to armed conflicts There is a need for further informed discussions on ensuring accountability for such breaches and offences, in the light of the Rome Statute and other applicable international law. We urge the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, among others, to further consider those issues.

In Bangladesh we consider water to be the vital, sustaining force of our economy, environment, ecology and culture. As a lower riparian and low-lying delta State vulnerable to climate change, we constantly grapple with challenges relating to the availability of fresh water, especially during the lean season. The growing saline intrusion in our coastal areas, the depletion of groundwater reserves in large urban areas and the persistent challenge of arsenic contamination of groundwater in certain parts of the country add to the systemic constraints in our overall water use and management.

Against the backdrop of such challenges, today more than 98 per cent of our population have access to safe drinking water, and more than 65 per cent have access to safe sanitation. Open defecation, involving as much as 42 per cent of the population in 2003, has been reduced to less than 1 per cent.

As a member of the United Nations-World Bank High-level Panel on Water, our Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to attend the Budapest Water Summit 2016 next week. Among other issues, Bangladesh will continue to advocate for the efficient governance and management of water resources, integrated management of shared river basins and access to less water-intensive technologies and crop varieties.

We commit to remain at the forefront of the international community's efforts in building a water-secure world for all.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia.

Mr. Imnadze (Georgia): I, too, would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating and thanking the Senegalese presidency for organizing this important debate on water, peace and security, which marks the first time that the issue has been formally considered in the Security Council. We appreciate the briefings that we have heard. Of particular interest to us were the conclusions presented on the second meeting of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, held in Senegal this year, and the proposals voiced in connection with advancing hydro-diplomacy.

Georgia aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the delegation of the European Union. I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

Water is indeed a vital resource and fundamental pillar of development and security policy. The scarcity of water resources and questions of access, management and exploitation have the potential to be used as triggers and methods of war. We need to address those questions in both security and development contexts. The linkages between Sustainable Development Goals 6 and 16 are particularly relevant.

We recognize the significance of transboundary cooperation to restore and prevent the degradation of damaged aquatic ecosystems. Over the past several decades, Georgia has concluded a number of agreements with neighbouring States regulating the management of water resources and has participated in numerous regional projects aimed at developing ecologically sound and rational water management. To that end, the sustainable utilization of water resources has been set as a priority, and national legislation on water management has been brought into full compliance with the internationally recognized principles of integrated water resources management.

Many villages across the occupation line in Georgia have suffered from water shortages following the 2008 foreign military intervention. The occupation forces have cut drinking-water supplies and blocked irrigation channels originating in the occupied Tskhinvali region. Villagers have been unable to carry out their agricultural work, which is the main source of income in those areas. We have managed to resolve the problem by constructing alternative trunk canals and building the necessary infrastructure.

Let me also mention a number of joint water projects that have become an instrument for restoring trust between the war-torn communities. A vivid example of that successful practice was the project aimed at improving the security of the Zonkari reservoir. That project allowed Georgian authorities to ensure a safe and sufficient water supply for the villages situated in the occupied region. With the mediation and financial support of international partners, notably the

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Georgia carried out rehabilitation projects aimed at ensuring drinking-water supply and the functioning of irrigation systems in conflict-affected villages across the occupation line. Those efforts demonstrate that water has a significant potential for confidence-building. It also demonstrates the importance of cooperation with regional organizations on the issue, something that was rightly emphasized in the concept note (S/2016/969, annex), presented by the Senegalese presidency.

In view of climate change, we have to develop a comprehensive approach to climate, economic development and water-security issues. Georgia has already experienced the devastating effects of the deadly flooding in Tbilisi in 2015, which killed 19 people and caused mass destruction. Since then, the Government has broadened its efforts to tackle environmental threats. We are committed to increasing local resilience, improving relief capabilities and facilitating relocation from the most vulnerable areas. With the support of international partners, we have carried out several projects aimed at improving the resilience of regions highly exposed to hydrometeorological threats. Along with those activities, we have taken the first steps in establishing a comprehensive early warning system in the country.

In conclusion, let me reiterate our readiness to further cooperate on questions related to the water-security nexus.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Cyprus.

Mr. Emiliou (Cyprus): Cyprus aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union and would like to add some additional remarks in its national capacity.

Allow me first to thank Senegal for organizing today's open debate and for all the initiatives that the country has taken in order to promote dialogue within the United Nations on the issues of water, peace and security.

Climate change, the growing world population and urbanization have led to an increase in water scarcity and to problems of access to safe drinking water and sanitation, with significant repercussions on everyday life for people around the world. Water access and management is also affected by conflict, with water-access disruptions, while political exploitation of water issues is not uncommon. Efforts to ensure control over water resources may also become a cause of conflict, as noted in the *World Water Development Report* of 2015.

Cyprus, being surrounded by water and having experienced drought and water scarcity on many occasions throughout its history, has its own extensive experience and views on the significance of good water management for sustainable development and for peace. We have successfully used innovation and technology as a method of addressing water shortages, with a state-of-the-art desalination system, among other things. We stand ready to share our experiences and our lessons learned and to contribute to the cooperation between countries, and, given the interconnection between the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to the overall implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

We welcome the increasing focus of the United Nations on the issues of water and sanitation. Sustainable Development Goal 6, on the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, is a significant step by the international community in putting the issues of water and sanitation at the forefront. The full implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change will have a significant effect on improving current problems of water scarcity and water management. We also recognize the positive contribution of the call to action of the High-Level Panel on Water. Moreover, we support the relevant activities and ongoing discussions within the United Nations aimed at promoting the better coordination and work of the United Nations system in an effort to better address water-related challenges around the world.

In order to address water-related issues and their links to conflict, there needs to be better understanding of those issues. In that context, we believe that the dimension of water-related issues should be incorporated into conflict prevention, where relevant. We also appreciate the contribution of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace.

The protections afforded by international humanitarian law during armed conflict cannot be stressed enough. In that regard, we believe that it is important to further study in depth the interlinkages between conflict, access to water and sanitation, and violations of international humanitarian law in order to enable the better implementation of humanitarian law in those instances.

Furthermore, it is our strong belief that water can become a source of stability and peace. As such, we believe that the promotion of transboundary agreements on water management and the promotion of water-related confidence-building measures are crucial. Such agreements and measures should be carefully built on provisions that will be for the benefit of all countries concerned, with no winners or losers. They should also be promoted with a sharp focus on ownership by the States or parties concerned.

In conclusion, please allow me to reiterate our support for today's debate and to express the belief that it will provide useful guidance as to the further development of this important matter within the United Nations system.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Palau.

Mr. Otto (Palau): We commend and thank Senegal, President of the Security Council for the month of November, for convening this meeting about a matter that is of great importance to all of us. I also thank the delegation of Senegal for the very useful concept note (S/2016/969, annex). We express our gratitude also for the briefings. The information shared by the briefers is both very important and useful in understanding the issues around water and the way forward in addressing relevant problems, especially those related to security and peace.

In March this year, my President declared a state of emergency in Palau owing to a drought caused by El Niño, impacting the whole population. The potential negative impacts of the lack of water, many of which were elaborated this morning, make water a very important issue for all of us. That is true for practically all of the small island developing States, as we have already heard. Allow me to present five ideas for the Council's consideration.

First, we need more information of the impacts of the lack of water on our security and peace. We firmly believe that, in order to ensure sustainable peace, we must have security first. That is linked to article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, under which everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person. Palau has fought for that basic principle in the Human Rights Council and will continue to do so. Regarding the much-needed information, there should be agreement among Member States on requests for the updating of the relevant reports of the Secretary-General, because updated information is key to making our decisions.

Secondly, access to water is a human right. Our body is approximately 80 per cent water, and our health and well-being depend to very large extent on the availability of this most basic nutrient. Therefore, water cannot and should never be allowed to become a business. We recognize that both the innovation and drive of the private sector, on the one hand, and the public investment in genuine and durable partnerships, on the other hand, as expressed in the Samoa Pathway, are needed, including the 10X20 Initiative mentioned earlier. But the role of the United Nations is to ensure, together with national Governments and civil society, that access to drinkable and safe water is secured for all, especially the most vulnerable. Palau thanks non-governmental organizations for their drive on this point.

Thirdly, water is linked to the impacts of climate change. Climate change is a threat multiplier that impacts our security and peace. We therefore think that the contributions of the Department of Political Affairs and of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General to addressing water challenges will be enhanced by having well-coordinated staff and experts serving in the field. That is why we have called also for the nomination of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Climate Change and Security.

Special political missions, both current and future, have a very important role to play by reducing their climate footprint and improving their management of the environment, acting also as catalysts to bring partners to act together in addressing the challenge of climate change and water. Local populations should never have to compete with United Nations personnel for local resources, or suffer negative impacts caused by their presence. With its partners, Palau has pushed in the General Assembly's Fourth and Fifth Committees for the greening of the special political missions.

Fourthly, actions on water in the Security Council and the General Assembly have to be aligned. We believe that the delivery by the Security Council on the issues of water and climate change has to be significantly improved, not just as part of conflict prevention but also as part of the recipe for successful conflict resolution. During the debate on the Sahel and terrorism in this Chamber earlier this year (see S/PV. 7699), relevant questions were raised as to how can women stop their

men from joining armed terrorists for cash if they are away from home searching for water, or how can girls be empowered through education if they cannot study either because they their basic needs — including water — are not met, or because they are out looking for or fetching water.

Finally, it is urgent to take decisive action. The time period we have to transform the world as envisioned in the 2030 Agenda is very short. We cannot attain much without security and peace. We therefore believe that we should work together during the seventy-first session of the General Assembly on two parallel draft resolutions in the General Assembly and the Security Council on the impacts of water and climate change on security and peace, following the successful example of the review the United Nations peacebuilding architecture.

We are hopeful that the Security Council and all Member States, working with the good offices of the new Secretary-General, will find success in taking action in the field on climate and water so that all of the "we the peoples" whom we serve will have their basic human rights, such as the rights to water, life, liberty and security, fulfilled.

Once again, we thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal for bringing this very important issue to the fore by convening today's meeting.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

Mrs. Pucarinho (Portugal): It is my pleasure to address the Security Council on behalf of Portugal. We very much welcome today's open debate, promoted by the Senegalese presidency, on a very important and ever-timely subject.

My brief statement is fully aligned with that delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union. I would like to make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

Throughout human history, access to clean water has always been a potential source of conflict. Although water is the most abundant resource on the planet, the fact that fresh water makes up less than 3 per cent of the Earth's hydric resources ready for human consumption turns it into a scarce and valuable resource. Furthermore, there is a great imbalance in its availability, with water being a relatively abundant resource in some regions and almost non-existent in other populated areas.

The uneven distribution of this most critical commodity, together with such other factors as population growth, generates tensions, both internally and among neighbouring countries, that can easily escalate into major disputes and conflicts, as often has been the case. The gradual diminution of quality water supplies can also be traced to the pernicious effects of climate change, as is well documented.

We know the facts. Lessons must be learned, and actions should be taken to prevent potential conflicts in future. That means we need to move definitively away from the paradigm of water scarcity as potential conflict generator, turning it into one of cooperation based, one hopes, on solidarity among communities and nations.

United Nations institutions, particularly the Security Council, long ago recognized and have often mainstreamed the importance of rational and inclusive management of natural resources as a pre-emptive measure for conflict prevention, which must be, and increasingly is, at the very heart of United Nations concerns and efforts. However, that has not prevented new tensions and conflicts related to access to water resources from emerging in different parts of the world.

The connection among natural resources, social development and peace was first laid out in the Stockholm Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, in 1972, where the impact of the human footprint on the environment was recognized and a normative structure for tackling its negative effects was formulated. That paved the way for the broader compromises of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and 20 years after that of the Rio+20 conference, in 2012, where water sustainability issues were at the very core of the discussions.

Goal 6 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reflects the full recognition of the importance of preserving our planet's water resources and the right of access to sources of clean water. It explicitly calls on countries to implement the human right to water and sanitation, which Portugal has consistently supported, promoting it as ultimately the right to life. The oft-quoted Antoine de Saint-Exupéry once said that water is "not necessary to life, but rather life itself". This has multiple valuable implications, certainly including from a peace and security perspective.

Forging common ground, building comprehensive partnerships and strengthening international cooperation is a path worth pursuing in this regard. Against that background, despite the fact that the process is lengthy and challenging, the action plan of the High-Level Panel on Water, adopted last September, sets an optimistic tone and includes important considerations and key requirements and principles, notably the need for political leadership for a comprehensive approach, a commitment to the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, transparency and inclusion, autonomy of all actors involved, collaboration among countries and organizations, and continuous engagement.

The action plan also sets a wide range of mostly interrelated priority actions, which in our opinion deserve support, as they can truly have a positive impact on improving water security, including undertaking a profound analysis of water crisis risks and identifying good practices for managing water-related natural disasters. On that point, we believe that just as there are so many regrettable disputes based on access to water, there are also many successful examples of cooperation based on negotiation and agreements, which could be used on a case-by-case basis as good references for joint water-management mechanisms and the disciplined sharing of water resources.

Other priority actions involve encouraging the United Nations to establish a common platform where States can exchange views and good practices, providing information to the States on the benefits of water-use efficiency, promoting academic studies on the impact of water-related disasters and ways and means to prevent them, and implementing projects that bolster water security and the economic resilience of marginalized communities. In our opinion, the message set out in the action plan is a good one that should be spread through traditional media and social networks. We must make sure it reaches a widespread audience, particularly local communities and youth.

Portugal shares the view that only a cross-cutting and interdependent process based on a transnational approach can provide the necessary legal and political framework to manage the availability and use of fresh water and access to sources for countries and populations for whom that resource is scarce or access involves risks. Portugal is fully committed to this common endeavour and will present its voluntary national review, in next year's High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 6 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Ms. Bahous (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Republic of Senegal for convening this important meeting. I would also like to thank all of today's briefers for their valuable presentations.

Water scarcity is a threat to human life and health. It is also a factor that threatens and undermines economic and social development, and a potential source of political instability and conflict — unless we are collectively able to deal with the emerging challenges posed by the crises of the lack of potable water and unequal access to water. We all share the human responsibility to make water a tool for regional and international cooperation and a factor of economic and social well-being in the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The scarcity of water resources in Jordan affects our security and sovereignty, not only because it stands in the way of achieving the SDGs, particularly Goal 6, but also because Jordan suffers from serious water scarcity and a lower per capita share vis-à-vis international standards. Jordan is the third-poorest country in water resources, and the per-inhabitant share of renewable water resources is lower than that in the international Water Poverty Index.

The protracted refugee situation adds pressure to the infrastructure in host countries. The common factors of that pressure are water, energy and the human environment. The humanitarian crises, particularly the Syrian refugee crisis, has depleted our fresh-water aquifer, which should have been protected and preserved for future generations. Those are not the only challenges. Others include the possibility of groundwater contamination, not to mention the possibility that that water too might be depleted due to the increase in population.

The demands on fresh-water sources in Jordan since the crisis in Syria began have increased by more than 25 per cent. Jordan hosts the largest number of refugees in the world in overall numbers. Hence, we have shouldered the responsibility on behalf of the international community, and that has created new and

more complex realities that have greatly challenged the ability of Jordan to achieve the SDGs. In that connection, I wish to thank the International Committee of the Red Cross for its help in meeting those challenges through its joint cooperation with Jordan in the rehabilitation of my country's water networks in order to provide services to over 150,000 inhabitants in the host communities of Syrian refugees.

The dangers of water scarcity and the challenges of climate change, pollution, population growth and the movements of internally displaced persons and refugees require an approach based on international governance that would make these issues priorities of the international community. They are central to Jordan's interests, both at the political and technical levels. Therefore, we have contributed to, and actively participated in, all international forums that support international cooperation frameworks to solve our water problems, including the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation and the High-Level Panel on Water that was set up by the United Nations and the World Bank to devise effective measures to expedite the implementation of SDG 6, on the provision of clean water and sanitation.

We would like to reaffirm that it is ethically and legally unacceptable to use water as a tool of war and conflict, as that affects the water rights of civilians in their lands, which leads to the deterioration of humanitarian conditions and more refugees and internally displaced persons.

The threat pertaining to water is not just a matter of scarcity or unequal access. It also includes the threat of the expansion of the activities of terrorist groups that spread the message of fear through killing and violence, as well as the possibility of contaminating water resources. Through their malicious acts, those gangs have made it clear that they adhere to no ethical boundaries, as they are desperate to use water resources as tools of threats, intimidation and terrorism.

In conclusion, we call upon the international community to work seriously to encourage international and regional cooperation with regard to water resources. That would protect the human environment and ensure water security so as to spread peace among countries in conflict and provide a social and economic environment that benefits all people.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Djibouti.

Mr. Doualeh (Djibouti) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank the Senegalese presidency for convening this Security Council open debate on an issue that falls under the theme of the maintenance of international peace and security: water, peace and security. My delegation would like to thank today's briefers — the Chair of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, Mr. Danilo Türk; Ms. Christine Beerli, Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross; and Mr. Sundeep Waslekar, President of Strategic Foresight Group — for their contribution to this important public debate. We also wish to thank you, Mr. President, for your concept note (S/2016/969, annex) in preparation for this meeting, as it highlights the salient points of our debate.

(*spoke in English*)

Djibouti wishes to commend Senegal for its leadership in convening the Arria Formula meeting on the same subject last year, presided over by His Excellency President Macky Sall. It built on past efforts by the Security Council to consider the nexus between water, peace and security and the protection of natural resources as a tool for preventing conflicts and building peace in post-conflict countries.

Since the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 47/193, of 22 December 1992 — which declares 22 March each year World Day for Water — pressure on water has been rising and action is urgent. In many places growing populations, more water-intensive patterns of growth, increased rainfall variability and pollution are combining to make water one of the greatest obstacles to poverty eradication and sustainable development. Flood and drought have already imposed huge social and economic costs, and climate change is making water extremes worse. The action plan of the High-Level Panel on Water and Peace affirms that

> "If the world continues on its current path, projections suggest that the world may face a 40 per cent shortfall in water availability by 2030. The consequences of such stress are local, transboundary and global in today's interconnected world."

Water is an important element of the discussion as a potential driver of conflict, a potential cause of disaster and an essential precondition for development. It is high time that we raised the political commitment to urgently address the issue. Africa has 64 transboundary river basins, covering 90 per cent of the continent. There is still no agreement for some of those river basins

in Africa. There is also increasing recognition that transboundary groundwater must be better factored into transboundary cooperative arrangements for water. Moreover, transboundary water cooperation is needed for the proper implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially indicator 6.5.2, on the proportion of transboundary basin areas with an operational arrangement for water cooperation.

(*spoke in French*)

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), our regional organization, has devoted much time and attention to developing a regional policy and legal framework for water resource management. In 2015, ministers responsible for water resources of the member countries of IGAD demonstrated strong political will to meet, in a coordinated manner, the multiple challenges linked to the common management of natural resources, in particular water governance. They agreed to promote closer cooperation for the equitable, sustainable, lasting and coordinated use, protection, conservation and management of transboundary water resources within the IGAD region; to promote and facilitate the establishment of institutional agreements and arrangements for the management of transboundary water resources within the IGAD region; to foster the harmonization of policies and legislation on the use of the development, protection, conservation and management of transboundary water resources; and to encourage research, technological development, awareness and capacity-building in the development and management of transboundary water resources.

(*spoke in English*)

It is also worth underlining that IGAD and the United Nations have agreed to develop a collaborative effort aimed at sharing experiences and good practices and, most important, at promoting a conflict-sensitive approach to managing natural resources, including fresh water and rivers.

We wish to take this opportunity to commend the role played by the International Committee of the Red Cross in raising awareness about the norms of international humanitarian law and in continuing to ensure the protection of water in times of armed conflict, and also for its vital humanitarian work as one of the main providers of water to populations affected by armed conflict.

To conclude, Djibouti wishes to reiterate its profound gratitude to Senegal and to the members of the Security Council for putting this issue on our agenda. We are convinced that investing in prevention so as to avoid the escalation of tensions in water-related conflicts should be one of the main priorities of this organ, as it has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The benefits far outweigh the costs.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Wilson (Australia): Water gives life, supports human development and enables sustainable economic growth. Yet water crises are ranked by the World Economic Forum as one of the top 10 global risks. Climate change has the potential to exacerbate water crises, which could in turn lead to or intensify conflicts and fuel forced migration.

Australia is concerned about the increasing risks to peace and security created by extreme weather events, including water scarcity. Cities, towns and peri-urban areas require functional water supply and sanitation systems. Failure to provide such services often leads to community tension and instability and can easily result in conflict. We see improved water governance as a key component in adapting to climate change, while planning for a growing population and ensuring economic development.

Good water governance is also essential to achieving many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) — most directly SDG 6, on ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. The 21 September joint statement of the High-Level Panel on Water called for a fundamental shift in the way the world looks at water. The Panel presented a transformative agenda to deliver change in water management and to increase investment on a global scale to build more resilient economies and societies. For Australia — a dry continent prone to highly variable rainfall — effective water management is critical to our economy. It has allowed us to make the most efficient use of our scarce water resources and to enable investment to meet the growing needs of agriculture, industry and urban communities, while ensuring there is water for the environment.

Through the High-Level Panel on Water, Australia has committed to a number of practical initiatives aimed at strengthening the capacity of countries facing

water crises. We are preparing a guide to improved water management, drawing on experience from within Australia and in our region, to help other countries effectively allocate water among competing users. That will have flow-on effects for food production, health outcomes and economic development. We have also established the Australian Water Partnership to assist countries to improve their water governance. It is a practical way to improve water resources management in partnership with countries and the United Nations system.

Australia also believes that the effective implementation of SDG 6 requires explicit attention to gender equality and social inclusion. Women and vulnerable populations face an increased risk of violence where water and sanitation services are only available outside the home, often in unsafe locations. Furthermore, we need to deliberately and proactively engage women and marginalized people and encourage their participation in strengthening water governance.

Australia is committed to encouraging and supporting sound water governance at the highest levels. That is why Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull is an active member of the High-Level Panel on Water, and it is why Australia will continue to work with countries in our region and beyond to protect precious water resources — in peace and in conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Finland.

Mr. Sauer (Finland): Finland aligns itself with the statement of the European Union (EU).

Finland welcomes the initiative to discuss the interlinkages between water, peace and security at this important forum.

While conflicts have globally decreased in number, they have also become more complex in nature. The root causes of different conflicts vary, but competition over natural resources is likely to increase in the future. Demand for fresh water is expected to increase by more than 50 per cent by 2050. At the same time, climate change, together with environmental degradation, is putting more pressure on the availability of natural resources — especially water. The growing interest in resources is a potential driver for conflict, and the Security Council, together with the Secretary-General, should assume its responsibility in terms of preventive response.

One of the key prevention tools is mediation. Through our co-chairmanship of the United Nations Group of Friends of Mediation, as well as in similar groups in the Organization for Security and Cooperation and in the EU, Finland has worked hard to strengthen the normative and institutional basis for mediation. We aim at equipping mediators with better skills, tools and partnerships. As part of those efforts, we supported the joint guidance note entitled *Natural Resources and Conflict. A Guide For Mediation Practitioners*, published by the United Nations Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Environment Programme in February 2015. The guide translates decades of experience in natural-resources-related dispute resolution into concise and practical advice, with specific chapters on water. It creates a framework for resolving disputes that centre on natural resources.

As experience has shown, water can also serve as a basis and an entry point for collaboration instead of for conflict. To achieve that, it is of vital importance to prove the win-win proposition in sharing resources and negotiated solutions. Approximately 40 per cent of the world's population lives in areas that share water resources with two or more countries, but only a third of transboundary river basins are covered by proper cooperation mechanisms. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes a target to promote cooperation on transboundary waters at all levels, as appropriate. We need strong commitments to implement that target.

The steering committee of the Group of Friends of Water in New York, of which Finland is a member, has been a strong advocate for the comprehensive water agenda to ensure the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6 and all water-related targets of the 2030 Agenda. Our own experiences show that institutional arrangements such as river commissions and international water conventions, together with very concrete measures such as regulation of water flows and fish stocks, measures to reduce pollution and the monitoring of water quality can be agreed upon in a manner that benefits all parties to those agreements and arrangements. In 1966, the International Law Association adopted the Helsinki Rules on the Uses of the Waters of International Rivers. Two international framework conventions — namely, the 1992 Water Convention, of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the so-called Helsinki Convention, and the International Watercourses Convention, adopted by the General

Assembly in 1997 — are now in force. Transboundary water cooperation and the related water conventions function as confidence-building mechanisms to prevent conflicts with a long-term view.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the delegation of Senegal for highlighting this important aspect of conflict prevention and to assure the Council of Finland's commitment to do its share in promoting the important discussion of the interlinkages of water, peace and security.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Danon (Israel): Israel was not blessed with an abundant supply of fresh water. Since its early beginnings, we had to find innovative ways to provide our people with access to this vital resource. As the late President of Israel Shimon Peres once said,

> "In Israel, a land lacking in natural resources, we learned to appreciate our greatest national advantage: our minds."

Faced with adversity, Israel developed groundbreaking water technologies, including drip-irrigation systems. In Israel we make every drop count.

While Israel still faces challenges to peace and security, it has successfully overcome its water crisis. After years of water shortage, today Israel enjoys the first water surplus in its history. In less than seven decades, the pioneering spirit of Israelis has made the desert bloom and transformed the land of swamps and sand into a start-up nation. Out of necessity, Israelis learned to squeeze the most out of every drop, while finding solutions to create as much as possible using as little as possible.

Today, Israel is committed to sharing those solutions with countries in need. This strong sense of responsibility towards others is rooted in our own history and the Jewish principle of *tikkun olam* — the duty to repair the world. It was in that spirit that our founding fathers and mothers created Mashav, Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation. Mashav utilizes cutting-edge technologies such as drip irrigation in humanitarian operations around the world. Drip by drip, Mashav experts are introducing this technology around the world, making a big splash from the greenhouses in South Africa to the sugarcane fields of Peru.

Israel continues to seek out new partnerships and to build bridges between nations. In 2012, the Governments of Israel, Italy and Senegal entered into a trilateral partnership to address the critical issues of food security and income growth for the people of Senegal. Today, Israel is helping the people of Senegal by sharing modern farming practices, as well as technical and business skills, with smallholder farmers, especially women. By decreasing labour requirements for irrigation and weeding, Mashav experts are empowering Senegalese women, helping them to improve crop yields, achieve financial security and bring a better quality of life to their families and communities.

Israel's water cooperation also takes place close to our home. Since the historic peace treaty with Jordan in 1994, the two countries have worked closely in many areas, including water technology. Recently, Israel signed a new agreement to supply Jordan with additional fresh water from the Sea of Galilee, thereby creating benefits for both countries and further strengthening our partnership for peace.

As we did with our friends in Africa and with our Jordanian neighbours, Israel is ready to assist the Palestinian Authority to address critical water challenges. We have taken important steps towards improving the conditions on the ground. Israel recently authorized additional water supplies to the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza within the framework of the memorandum of understanding known as the Red-Dead Memorandum. The additional supply to Gaza covers the entire amount of the Palestinian request for increased water supply from Israel. The Palestinians have made clear that they are not interested in an additional supply beyond that amount.

Israel is currently preparing a comprehensive, multi-year master plan for improving the water infrastructure in the West Bank. Moreover, Israel has also reaffirmed its approval of desalination, water infrastructure and sewage projects in Gaza, including a large desalination plant that is being planned.

Unfortunately, the Palestinian leadership refuses to cooperate with the Government of Israel on water-related issues. Despite our dedicated efforts, we have encountered several obstacles standing in the way of the improvement of the current situation. The Palestinian Authority has yet to sign the protocols for the implementation of the Red-Dead Memorandum, and

therefore prevents the implementation of the authorized addition of water to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Moreover, due to the Palestinian Authority's unwillingness, the joint water committee has yet to be renewed, preventing progress on dozens of water infrastructure projects in the West Bank.

Those actions on the part of the Palestinian Authority clearly deepen the crisis and hinder progress towards a solution. We continue to hope that the Palestinian Authority will start demonstrating responsibility for its own people. However, the international community should be aware of the fact that, without an immediate change in the Palestinian refusal to engage with Israel on the critical issue of water, a severe water crisis is to be expected this coming summer.

Water knows no borders and technology knows no language. United States President John F. Kennedy once said,

> "Anyone who can solve the problems of water will be worthy of two Nobel prizes — one for peace and one for science."

Israel is committed to promoting innovative solutions to the challenges of water to bring nations closer together and to bring the life-giving power of water to all people.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Romania.

Mr. Jinga (Romania) (*spoke in French*): I wish to thank the Senegalese presidency of the Security Council for having organized this extremely useful debate.

Romania aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. I would now like to make some remarks in my national capacity.

(*spoke in English*)

An ancient Chinese proverb says that water can sink boats as well as float them, and water can indeed be simultaneously productive and destructive. We live in a divided world in which less than half of the global population has achieved water security. It was pointed out at last year's Davos World Economic Forum that water-related issues such as drought and pollution would be the biggest threats to the planet for the next decade. Water is a very political matter. The action plan released in September by the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace clearly underlines the fact that technical solutions to many of the world's water problems already exist, but that we need strong and coordinated political leadership to make progress. Water is also a finite and irreplaceable resource, renewable only if well managed. Today, more than 1.7 billion people live in river basins whose depletion through use exceeds their natural recharge. If that trend continues, by 2025 two thirds of the world's population will be living in water-stressed countries.

For many small island developing States, dealing with water threats is a matter of survival, owing to rising sea levels. Many least-developed countries are affected by increasing droughts and extreme weather events. They require better access to funds for adaptation projects, but they also need us to revisit the paradigm of water governance, because water issues are linked to climate change, poverty, food, health and energy and should be seen as cross-sectoral and multidisciplinary.

Romania fully supports working to ensure sustainable water resources around the globe. In that regard, we sponsored the draft resolution introduced in the Second Committee by Tajikistan entitled "International Decade for Action, 'Water for Sustainable Development', 2018-2028" (A/C.2/71/L.12), and we welcome the high-level conference in support of the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 that Sweden and Fiji will organize in New York next June.

The lack of institutional capacity for managing shared water resources could lead to misperceptions and fears. In some parts of the world there is a long history of mistrust around joint access to water resources. Some of the best known such examples revolve around the Nile and Jordan Rivers, while the question of water-sharing is one of the final status issues in the peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine, as defined by the Oslo Accords. We therefore encourage the promotion of international agreements on water cooperation.

While the Geneva Conventions regard water resources and installations as key areas of civilian infrastructure, and therefore supposedly protected from attack, reality has unfortunately proved otherwise. Perhaps no conflict has reflected the effects of the horrors of war on civilians more than the situation in Syria, where water has become a weapon. Limiting civilian populations' access to water supplies is a grave breach of international humanitarian law and human rights.

Water insecurity in some parts of the world represents a threat to the entire world because, as other speakers have pointed out, water ignores boundaries. Good communication, strengthened relations between upstream and downstream States and strong institutions are therefore essential to successful negotiations on water. Many opportunities can also emerge from negotiations on energy, agriculture and infrastructure. Education matters, too, because it will shape the next generation of leaders on the issue of water. Bilateral cooperation and international mediation, facilitation, good offices and dialogue are effective methods of preventing, managing and resolving water disputes. The United Nations should therefore continue to deploy sustained diplomatic efforts to secure regional cooperation on water.

Where the experience of my own region is concerned, the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region, initiated by Romania and Austria, has helped to advance cooperation among the Danube's riparian countries in areas such as transport, energy security, environmental protection, education, tourism and rural development. Last but not least, since 2010, Romanian experts, in partnership with the United Nations and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, have been providing professional training for water-supply specialists from Eastern Europe, the Black Sea region and Central Asia.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the Government of Senegal for organizing today's open debate on water, peace and security, and for the related concept note (S/2016/969, annex). At the United Nations and in the principal international forums where water issues are discussed, as well as in the multilateral and bilateral international conventions, water is considered a fundamental element in development and our continued existence. In that context, we are concerned about some of the statements in the concept note, such as that water has always been considered a driver of conflict. There is no evidence for that notion. In Argentina's view, water is a catalyst for peace and countries' efforts aimed at cooperation, dialogue and integration should be founded on that concept.

We should recall that General Assembly resolution 1803 (XVII) and the outcome document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development on "The future we want" (General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex) recognize the right of peoples and nations to permanent sovereignty over their natural wealth and resources. Argentina supports the development of the concept of the right to water and sanitation as a human right that every State must assure for individuals subject to its jurisdiction, without regard to other States. Similarly, and more recently, with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community established that one of its Goals is to

> "[e]nsure availability of water and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all".

Considered in that way, the issue of water must be addressed from the perspective of poverty eradication and sustainable development. I should emphasize that Argentina is a sponsor of the draft resolution being negotiated in the Second Committee entitled "International Decade for Action, 'Water for Sustainable Development', 2018-2028" (A/C.2/71/L.12), and we also support the work of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace launched by the Secretary-General.

I would like to reaffirm the definition of water security for the strategic plan of the eighth phase of UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme as

> "the capacity of a population to safeguard access to adequate quantities of water of acceptable quality for sustaining human and ecosystem health on a watershed basis, and to ensure efficient protection of life and property against water-related hazards". (*IHP/2012/IHP-VIII/1Rev, p. 5*)

In that context, Argentina supports the concepts of the integrated management of water resources, of watersheds and the need for cooperation and rational use where resources are concerned, at both the regional and international levels, in order to achieve sustainable water management. We should also recall that international humanitarian law forbids attacks during armed conflicts aimed at preventing people's access to water, used as a weapon of war.

In accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Argentina continues to maintain a constructive position, but we believe that the Council should not distort its functions by acting on issues that are beyond its remit or link

environmental problems to security issues, since in the case we are discussing, water is not in itself a cause of conflict. Based on the points I have mentioned, it is up to the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, UN-Water, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the regional economic commissions, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and other specialized agencies to address water and other environmental issues.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Botswana.

Mr. Sisa (Botswana): I would first like to join other delegations in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of November. My delegation would also like to thank you for convening today's open debate on water, peace and security under the agenda item on the maintenance of international peace and security. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Danilo Türk, Chair of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace; Ms. Christine Beerli, Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross; and Mr. Sundeep Waslekar, President of the Strategic Foresight Group, for their detailed and insightful briefings.

Botswana welcomes this open debate because water is increasingly becoming a scarce resource in our country. In that regard, we consider the sustainable use of natural resources, including water, as critical to national development and to the maintenance of international peace and security, since water is a scarce and shared resource. Botswana therefore supports regional and global initiatives that promote a sustainable and resilient development pathway. The principle of sustainability underscores the importance of meeting the current generation's needs without affecting the ability of future generations to do the same.

The scarcity of water and its inequitable geographical distribution makes it a potential source of conflict. In that respect, it is important that neighbouring countries sign bilateral and multilateral agreements on shared watercourses in order to promote cooperation in the management and sharing of water. In furtherance of that objective, States members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), of which Botswana is a member, signed the Revised Protocol on Shared Watercourses on 7 August 2000. The Revised Protocol is underpinned by concepts of environmentally sound management, sustainable development and the equitable and reasonable utilization of shared watercourses in the SADC region. In addition, the Revised Protocol also promotes the exchange of available information and data on hydrology, hydrogeology, water quality and the meteorological and environmental conditions of shared watercourses.

It is important to stress that the conservation, protection, development and the economical use of water resources should be promoted to meet the declining levels in water supply, the growing demand for water for domestic, agricultural, industrial, navigational and environmental purposes and for the benefit of current and future generations.

I have to underscore here that shared watercourse agreements are necessary to resolve any potential conflicts on shared watercourses. In that regard, we commend Member States that have signed international watercourse agreements and the United Nations Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses. Transboundary water resources play an instrumental role in Botswana's water security, as the country relies on international waters. In that connection, Botswana has signed and ratified agreements in respect of four river basin commissions established with riparian States to promote closer cooperation in the management of shared watercourses.

We recognize the importance of holding continuing debates on this matter, as studies forecast that water scarcity, exacerbated by climate change, may threaten international peace and security in the future. Studies estimate that the number of regions that will experience inadequate water supplies will continue to grow, hence the high risk of water conflicts.

In conclusion, we applaud the efforts made by the Security Council to regularly convene open debates on water, peace and security and for adopting a forward-looking approach.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica.

Mr. Castro Cordoba (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica congratulates you, Mr. President, as well as the Permanent Mission of Senegal, for having convened this open debate during your presidency of the Security Council. We believe that having an opportunity

to discuss this vital resource for the survival of this and future generations, especially in the Council, gives water the appropriate and necessary political priority that it needs within the United Nations.

Many have predicted that future wars will be fought over water, and some countries have declared that water is a matter of national security. However, we believe that water can also be a source of opportunities for peace and conflict-prevention through strategic cooperation and synergies that could be forged at the local, national, regional and global levels.

What is certain is that water on our planet is sometimes scarce and is unevenly distributed geographically. But that resource is also facing major threats due to its inadequate management, waste, pollution and, last but not least, to climate change, whose effects can be seen in water in the form of droughts, floods and hurricanes, as we were warned by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

All those threats could increase water-related conflicts, both internally and internationally. That is why we believe in the need to ensure that the protection of water protection becomes an international political priority. Although we have an international agreement dealing with transboundary waters, another one on wetlands and many binational agreements on watercourses, we need to think about a dedicated binding international instrument that would protect this resource as a strategic asset for the survival of humankind, but also for the survival of ecosystems. We must also have in place an institutional architecture that would protect this precious liquid, so that future generations can see in it opportunities for peace and sustainable development, and not as sources of conflicts and wars as predicted.

We trust that progress in our efforts, as well as progress in the discussion on the importance of water resources in forums and relevant documents — such as the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the New Urban Agenda (Habitat III), among others — will allow us to identify and to act on opportunities for the benefit of the common good and to contribute to creating real options to achieve lasting peace and sustainable development throughout the world. In that regard, the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6 — ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all — and of all the interrelated goals and objectives, should be a central element of our mission as a multilateral body. Such progress will be fundamental for protecting the human right of access to water and sanitation, since the United Nations itself recognized that this is a vital right, one that is necessary in order to enjoy all the other human rights.

Costa Rica has had valuable experiences in terms of cross-border cooperation, since on both borders we have rivers that unite us with our neighbours. We firmly believe in the need to bolster cross-border cooperation in water management in an ongoing fashion, and not only in the form of projects for the benefit of the cross-border population, which in our region is among the most vulnerable.

Our experience in integrated water management and its impact on the well-being of the population are proof of the contribution of water in peacebuilding and peacekeeping, in a real and lasting peace. Hence our interest in promoting regional cooperation mechanisms that would pool national experiences and could be shared with other developing countries.

We must develop management, financial and planning mechanisms to protect the sources of water that are necessary to guarantee future access to water for our populations, especially the rural population and indigenous communities, while making them active participants in local communities in protecting that resource, which would prevent conflicts over access to water. Within those mechanisms, we can mention, for example, our experience in the payment for water environmental services and measuring the water footprint of all our activities.

The fact that the Security Council has devoted an open debate to the issue of water, peace and security is of paramount importance for this natural finite and vulnerable resource. It shows that we have begun to realize that, if we do not protect it adequately, if we do not measure its true value as a development instrument, if we do not create the institutional and legal structure that is required, water will be a threat to international security, and not a never-ending source of sustainable development and peace as it should be.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands) (*spoke in French*): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for your vision

in including this item on the agenda of the Security Council. My country supports you whole-heartedly in this matter, particularly given the close bilateral cooperation between Senegal and the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the area of water and water protection.

(*spoke in English*)

The Kingdom of the Netherlands aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union.

In view of time constraints, I will read out a shortened version of my statement. My full statement will be available on Twitter.

We fully support the statement made by the representative of Italy, also in the light of our cooperation related to the upcoming split term with Italy in the Security Council. During this split term, in 2017 and 2018, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, together with Italy, as announced by our colleague earlier today, will continue your sustained efforts, Mr. President, to address climate and water issues in the context of the peace and security agenda.

Our planet has sufficient water resources to provide water security for all, but at the same time people around the globe face situations where there is too much or too little water, or where the water is too dirty.

Let me highlight three issues in this context: first, water and the need for international cooperation; secondly, water, climate change and migration; and, thirdly, the need for water diplomacy.

First, on water and cooperation, the Prime Minister of the Netherlands is honoured to be on the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, together with, inter alia, President Macky Sall of Senegal. This United Nations/World Bank-supported Panel will champion a comprehensive approach to developing and managing water resources. It will also focus on improving water- and sanitation-related services. We commend Singapore for its leadership on this issue. The Swiss-Senegalese initiative of a panel on water, peace and security is equally timely, and we look forward to working together to ensure the appropriate connections between the two panels, or may I say bridges, in today's context. Furthermore, the capacity to prevent water-related conflicts through mediation and other political means needs to be strengthened. An excellent example was given earlier today: the Senegal River Basin Development Organization.

This brings me to my second theme: water and migration issues.

People do not want to leave their homes unless they are forced to do so. As our colleague from Palau just said, climate change threatens the existence of people in small island developing States. In the past year we have seen the migration crisis soar, which has made clear that we need to tackle the root causes of migration. Water scarcity, climate change and food insecurity are among these root causes. They can be connected to social instability and potentially violent conflict. We welcome the fact that climate-related factors were acknowledged at the United Nations migration summit last September. As we move forward, our policies and funding will need to follow suit. In this regard, the Dutch Government is identifying options to intensify our cooperation on water issues with countries in the Sahel region.

The third issue is the need for water diplomacy.

We must make sure that water unites us and does not divide us. We therefore need to intensify effective water diplomacy. As an example, last March we organized a seminar in Khartoum for diplomats from the States of the Nile basin, so as to prevent future water conflicts. Furthermore, last year the Netherlands launched a planetary security initiative, which is a global platform to address security issues from a climate-change perspective. The next conference is planned for 5 and 6 December, again, like last year, at the Peace Palace in The Hague, the legal capital of the world.

In conclusion, I thank you once again, Mr. President, for having put this issue on our agenda. Let us all work together to address water issues in a comprehensive manner, connecting all the pillars of the United Nations. Let us work together to ensure that water is a cause for cooperation and not conflict, and to ensure that water contributes to peace, justice and development. The Kingdom of the Netherlands will continue to be a partner for that important purpose.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Falouh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): One of the priorities of the national water plan of action of the Syrian Government is to ensure a supply of water now and into the future. Prior to the crisis in Syria, we had registered significant achievements by providing citizens with 99 per cent of their water

needs in cities, and 90 per cent in rural dwellings. Unfortunately, these rates have decreased during the crisis in the light of the fact that most of the water-pumping stations and water wells have been destroyed or looted by armed terrorist groups, particularly in unstable regions.

It is important to stress that using water resources as a weapon is a gross violation of all relevant provisions of international humanitarian law. This leads us to take a closer look at what armed terrorist groups are doing in my country, Syria. Some like to call them the armed opposition, or non-State armed groups. Those groups use water resources as a weapon to bring pressure to bear on the Government of Syria and civilians.

What has been witnessed in Aleppo and Damascus is a clear example of this. Civilians in both cities suffered from long periods of water interruption after armed terrorist groups bombarded wells and pipelines, poisoned the water and looted and blew up pumping stations. This is in addition to the bombing of water and electricity facilities by what is called the international coalition, which led to acute water scarcity and had negative repercussions on the lives of civilians.

In addition to the tremendous harm inflicted on our water resources because of such terrorist attacks, the coercive unilateral economic measures imposed on my country by the European Union and the United States of America, among other countries, have increased the pressure on Syria's national efforts to provide its citizens with water. Such illegitimate measures have made it impossible to provide the necessary fuel and spare parts to pumping stations in Syria. Those measures have obstructed the implementation of projects undertaken by the Government of Syria in cooperation with United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations. I would cite as an example the inability of Oxfam recently to provide the fuel needed to operate the pumping station in Aleppo because of the European measures imposed on Syria.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic is endeavouring to work according to a strategic vision that is not limited to emergency humanitarian assistance but includes adopting a strategy for rebuilding the infrastructure of all facilities as well as rehabilitating the affected irrigation networks. This requires the lifting of the unilateral coercive economic measures, which have had negative repercussions on all sustainable development fields in Syria, including the sustainability of water resources and the ability to provide for the needs of citizens.

In addressing the issue of the protection of water resources, we must all be careful to avoid politicizing this vital water sector, especially among countries sharing international river waterways. These countries must respect international law and the relevant international resolutions as well as the agreements signed when it comes to such sharing, and also avoiding undermining the interests of other countries or decreasing their share for political reasons.

We also stress the need for concerted international efforts towards supporting the legitimate rights of people languishing under the yoke of occupation, including the right to have access to water, especially because they are the indigenous heirs of those natural resources.

In that vein, we recall what our people are facing in the occupied Syrian Golan and the intentional restriction imposed by the Israeli occupation forces on natural resources, in particular water, which is provided only to Israeli settlers, while Syrians are deprived of that natural resource through discriminatory policies with regard to prices and limitations on drinking and agricultural water, in clear violation of international humanitarian law, human rights law and the relevant resolutions of the Organization.

In conclusion, the Government of my country is anxious to do its utmost to provide for the needs of Syrians and protect them from terrorism, which is negatively affecting all aspects of their lives, including water resources. We try to avoid the use of this vital resource as a tool to exert pressure on Governments and civilians.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I now give the floor to the representative of Slovakia.

Mr. Ružička (Slovakia): If this glass contained all the water on Earth and I drank it in one gulp, it would disappear. I would like to thank the Senegalese presidency for focusing in particular on the issue of water and the nexus between water and security. We thank the Chair of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, Mr. Danilo Türk, and the other briefers for their valuable insights.

My Armenian colleague cited a wise phrase from Chinese philosophy, and for my own statement I have also included a quote from Lao Tzu:

"Nothing is softer or more flexible than water. Yet nothing can resist it."

We welcome the fact that the Security Council has increasingly recognized the importance of natural resource management in connection with conflict prevention and peacebuilding since the 1990s. As an example — although not singling out water specifically — in presidential statement S/PRST/2011/15, the Council expressed concern that the possible adverse effects of climate change may in the long-term aggravate certain existing threats to international peace and security.

Ensuring water security for the world's population by 2030 is one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Over 2 billion people face a daily struggle to find clean water to drink. That statistic is expected to rise in the coming decades owing to the growing demands on water supplies and the increasing effects of climate change. There are real links between water and all phases of conflict. Although water resources have rarely been the sole cause of armed conflict or war, there is a long history of water-related tensions and violence over access to water in the context of economic and social development. Water resources have been used as a political, economic or military tool, including by non-State actors. On the other hand, conflicts often have a devastating impact on water management, infrastructure, quality and access. Populations in conflict-affected countries are twice as likely to lack clean water as people in other developing countries.

In that context, we welcome the focus that the Secretary-General-elect has placed on prevention and mediation. He wrote in his vision statement addressed to the President of the General Assembly,

> "The world spends much more energy and resources managing crises than preventing them. Thus the United Nations must uphold a strategic commitment to a culture of prevention".

In that context, *Natural Resources and Conflict: A Guide for Mediation Practitioners*, produced by the Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Environment Programme, provides an excellent tool to be used exhaustively in our work. The United Nations should continue and improve the practice of mediating disputes over natural resources, including water-related conflicts, as was highlighted at the Aria Formula meeting on water, peace and security held at Senegal's initiative on 22 April.

We are convinced that the work of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, which was launched on 16 November in Geneva, aimed at developing by autumn 2017 a set of proposals geared towards preventing and resolving water-related conflicts, will be a crucial contribution in that respect. The work of United Nations regional centres could also be accordingly strengthened in this area. In that regard, a positive example is the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, which plays an important mediation role in promoting the responsible sharing and management of the region's water supply among the five Central Asian States.

One third of world's population depends entirely on groundwater. There is broad recognition that transboundary aquifers are a critical and inseparable component of the global water resource system. They are crucial for food production and account for 43 per cent of the total amount of water used for irrigation. The UNESCO inventory of 2015 has identified 592 transboundary aquifers in the world. Transboundary aquifers can be a further source of water-related tensions. Moreover, in 2008, the International Law Commission adopted 19 draft articles on the law of transboundary aquifers to be considered by Member States when negotiating future arrangements for the management of their transboundary aquifers. To promote the issue of groundwater governance, my delegation organized a seminar with the cooperation of UNESCO on 17 October, highlighting the importance of groundwater resources and transboundary aquifers in the framework of SDG 6.

Finally, I would like to underline the importance of regional cooperation in transboundary water management, which can help build mutual respect, understanding and trust among countries and promote peace, security and sustainable economic growth. My country holds the presidency in the European Union Danube River Strategy, which provides a basis for improved cooperation among 14 countries along Europe's second-longest river. The goal of the Strategy is to stimulate regional and cross-border cooperation in numerous areas, including the management of water resources and a shared procedure for identifying water deficiencies.

Mikhail Gorbachev once said,

> "Water has the power to move millions of people. Let it move us in the direction of peace".

Our rivers and groundwater are the life blood of the planet and must be shared and protected from the effects of conflict and exploitation.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Bouah-Kamon (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I congratulate you, Sir, on the dynamic manner with which Senegal has presided over the Security Council this month. I also thank today's briefers, whose statements allow for a better understanding of what is at stake with regard to water management throughout the world.

As was the case during the most recent open debate (see S/PV.7816), my delegation is especially pleased to participate in today's debate devoted to the issue of water, peace and security, which provides us an opportunity to exchange views on this important topic.

Water is a natural resource and, at the same time, it is a food, a source of energy, a means of communicating and an essential component of the agricultural cycle. Simply put, water is the source of life, and some might even say that water is life. Through its many and essential functions, water is of a strategic dimension for human, animal and vegetable life. Human activities linked to inappropriate or restrictive uses of this natural resource can sometimes become a source of conflict. The history of peoples unfortunately shows us that water has been used for strategic and military purposes and exclusive and even criminal designs. The link between water, peace and security is therefore a question of great relevance because today, as in the past, it continues to fuel tensions undermining international peace and security. Experts in the area of the geopolitical role of water even speculate that future wars will waged over it and that that war has already been declared.

Faced with the risk of water-related conflicts, people have been thinking for a long time about the options we have for peaceably managing our water and settling our disputes. The mechanisms proposed so far often involve mediation and cooperation and are based on bilateral, multilateral and international agreements, as was rightly pointed out in the concept note (S/2016/969, annex) underlying our debate. Such agreements have enabled us to avoid many potential conflicts around the world. It is therefore important to ensure that the international community, in particular the United Nations through the Security Council, continue to encourage Member States to use such mechanisms, especially in the case of transboundary cooperation. For our part, Côte d'Ivoire actively participates in the efforts made by the Mano River Union for political, economic and security cooperation among Member States.

In the same vein, it would be useful for States to incorporate in their national legislation international legal instruments for the prevention and punishment of criminal acts and war crimes related to the access or use of water. In that regard, my delegation would like to refer to article 54 of the Protocol additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts, known as Protocol I, and to article 14 of Protocol II of 8 June 1977 additional to the Geneva Conventions; to article 29 of the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses; and to article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In conflict areas or post-conflict situations, water issues should also be taken into account in the mandate of peacekeeping operations or peacebuilding processes.

Water is the most abundant resource on Earth, but only a small amount — about 2.53 per cent — is freshwater that can be used for agriculture, industry and human consumption. Studies show that, by 2025, within national borders, close to 4 billion people across the world could find themselves in a situation of water stress. A report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) from 2006 indicated that 90 per cent of the population of the Middle East and North Africa will live in countries affected by water shortages by 2025. In addition to those areas mentioned in the UNDP report, much of sub-Saharan Africa is also concerned by this issue, with potential implications for agriculture, food, health and the economy. In countries such as mine, where the cycle of life, in particular the agricultural cycle, is intimately linked to the natural phenomenon of precipitation, water stress sometimes can be a source of tension and even open conflict among farmers, cattle breeders and their communities.

My delegation would like to emphasize the importance of technology transfers and fighting climate change as relevant approaches for developing countries. That includes strengthening the capacities of those countries in terms of adaptation and the mitigation of the adverse effects of climate change, but also to enabling them to acquire innovative irrigation methods for agriculture and cattle raising, as well as desalination techniques to ensure greater water

availability. Addressing water issues and combating climate change through Sustainable Development Goals 6 and 13 offer real prospects for the future. United Nations agencies, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization and UNDP, for their part, should play a particularly active role.

As we have been hearing throughout this debate, the issue of water is of strategic importance for humankind, and therefore must be given due attention in order to prevent future wars in the upcoming decades. My delegation therefore welcomes the fact that the Security Council has taken on this issue because water wars are most often those of the poor and the weak, far from our gaze and the great public debates.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Haiti.

Mr. Régis (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, first of all, on behalf of the Government of Haiti, to welcome the initiative taken by Senegal and to warmly congratulate its Government. By inviting the Security Council and the entire international community to address the important issue of water in relation to international peace and security, Senegal once again has demonstrated its well-known commitment to the issue of water as an element of peace and international cooperation.

The Senegalese initiative is all the more timely given that it takes place in the wake of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the recent Marrakesh Climate Change Conference. It also responds to growing concerns that water has become a potential source of crisis and conflict in a context of growing scarcity exacerbated by climate change and the abusive use of and pollution of this raw material.

Water is an essential factor in the global security environment. Indeed, demand is rising steadily and the prospect of an overall increase of 30 per cent by 2030 can only have a serious impact on the economies of many countries, especially in the South. My country, the Republic of Haiti, is part of those regions already under water stress, which, according to projections, will include half of the world's population by 2025, with all the negative consequences that involves when it comes to economic, social and health development, as well as the unyielding acceleration of migratory movements.

All the more disturbing is the fact that water is and can be used as a weapon of war. It is the cause of, and has contributed to, the worsening of many local and regional conflicts in recent decades. In some cases, control over water resources is itself a strategic issue. In the long term, the scarcity of this raw material — renewable, but limited — can only exacerbate the potential for conflicts related to its availability, access, distribution and use, at both the domestic level and among States.

Consequently, there is every reason to fear that the dialectic of the dreaded water shortage and the continuously growing needs of the global population could lead to conflicts, which could constitute a threat to international peace and security. Today's meeting of the Council is therefore an opportunity for us to strategically reflect together on the issue of water as a factor for peace and security, while recognizing that it is essential not only to protect water from the effects of war, but also to safeguard this vital natural resource for the sustainable development of humankind.

Access to water, just like access to shelter, food, education and health care, is recognized as a fundamental right of every human being. It is crucial for social cohesion, political stability, development and poverty reduction. In sum, it is essential for peace. In several regions of the world — whether in the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa or Asia — the scarcity of water, its high cost, uneven distribution and lack of accessibility all dramatically limit the full enjoyment of that right. Such factors contribute to exacerbating poverty, suffering and the vulnerability of populations deprived of it. In some cases, they are the common denominators of unrest, civil wars and fratricidal struggles that afflict affected populations. I would like to underscore the tragic situation in Haiti, which in recent years has had to face serious challenges largely due to the lack of access to reliable water resources and sanitation infrastructure.

In addition to exposure to the traditional infectious diseases, since 2010, Haiti has endured the painful experience of a cholera epidemic. In six years, cholera has already claimed the lives of more than 1,000. It has intensified since Hurricane Matthew swept through the country and continues to sow desolation among the Haitian population. It should be emphasized that, after having long refused to admit the obvious, the United Nations recently assumed its moral responsibility in the outbreak of that health tragedy and the suffering caused. In addition to being a perfect illustration of the catastrophic consequences of water pollution in an already impoverished country, it is clear that that

tragedy has also revealed the unexpected shortcomings of a peacekeeping mission mandated by the Security Council. It has undoubtedly taken too long to adopt the corrective and adaptive measures that were necessary in view of the serious nature of the challenges and extent of the consequences.

Ultimately, the cholera epidemic in Haiti was also the result of a lack of empathy and international solidarity towards a country struggling with an unprecedented health disaster. Indeed, it is shameful that repeated appeals by the United Nations to obtain the necessary funding that would have considerably contained the spread of the epidemic did not receive the desired response. Fortunately, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who should be commended, recently launched a new two-pronged approach, which calls for vigorous action, both now and over the next two years, to assist the victims and their families and, above all, to help Haiti build public health-care infrastructure that will enable the country to contain the disease and, over the long term, address the serious challenges of providing safe drinking water and sanitation. The Haitian people, in particular the victims, their relatives and the affected population, are eagerly hoping that international solidarity will not be lacking this time around.

Before concluding, I would like to make three observations.

First, this discussion at the level of the Security Council is timely given the multiple possibilities for future conflicts that could be caused by water scarcity throughout the world. I firmly believe that concrete proposals will emerge from today's meeting that will underscore water's essential role as a fundamental pillar of development and reaffirm the inextricable link that exists between water and international peace and security and, as such, grant it all the importance that it deserves in the Security Council's work programmes, including its peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations. In that regard, we believe that it is judicious to look ahead and put in place appropriate mechanisms in order to, as needed, minimize or mitigate the consequences of natural or man-made disasters on water resources and populations concerned.

Secondly, access to water is a fundamental right and that will never be emphasized enough. In the light of the concept note prepared by the Permanent Mission of Senegal, we hope that today's discussion will identify new avenues for action on the most effective means of promoting the enjoyment and respect of the universal right to reliable water resources that are available in sufficient quantities. It is up to the international community to redouble its efforts to ensure that the enjoyment of that right is made possible for the 1.7 billion people who continue to live without access to a minimum quality of water or sanitation because of insufficient investment.

Thirdly, I fervently hope that today's discussion will be ongoing and lead to innovative guidelines that can contribute to the strengthening of the principles of international water law; the effective prevention and upstream settlement of inter-State water resources-related conflicts; national capacity-building in developing countries, in particular in the areas of sustainable water management and resolution of related conflicts, and better international protection of this primary resource — water — and significant improvement in access, which are all indissociable elements of the triptych of development, peace and security.

We are confident that the work of today's meeting will make a significant contribution to the establishment of an environment of peace, security and cooperation that is conducive to sustainable development, in which the full access to water is guaranteed on the basis of the cardinal principles of equality, equity and justice and solidarity.

In conclusion, let me now address the representative of Senegal. Allow me to quote the late Léon Laleau, a Haitian author and politician who was also Minister for Foreign Affairs of Haiti:

> "Do you feel the pain and the despair, unlike any other, that seeks to tame the heart that Senegal gave me, with words from France?"

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your country's presidency of the Security Council this month. I would also like to thank Senegal for convening today's open debate on the theme of water, peace and security.

The world's growing population, the increasing water consumption due in part to increased urbanization all over the world, especially in developing countries, climate change, drought, desertification and other factors have resulted in a scarcity of this vital resource

and pushed some some States to the brink of water poverty. That has led to competition over water within States in some cases and between States in others. Such competition could develop into conflicts that negatively affect national, regional and international security.

The Sudan, concerned about water resources and the role they play in inter-State relations, almost two decades ago established a department for the management of water and natural resources at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in order to coordinate regional and international cooperation efforts on this important issue and lead State efforts in water diplomacy. Our multidirectional national efforts have produced very positive results at the regional level, the most important of which was the conclusion of an agreement on principles among the three States of the eastern Nile basin, namely, Ethiopia, Egypt and the Sudan, on the Ethiopian Great Renaissance Dam, signed in Khartoum on 23 March 2015 following eight rounds of negotiations, which also took place in Khartoum. That resulted in an atmosphere conducive to cooperation among the three States, within the framework of this and future projects.

In the light of the growing interest in water issues, my country's delegation would like to confirm that the Sudan is determined to strengthen the role it plays in the area of water diplomacy. It hopes that the international community will step up its efforts to assist the Sudan to overcome the challenges that impede the achievement of that objective. Among them would be intensified efforts for peace in the Sudan so as to redirect resources wasted on conflicts towards efforts to implement sustainable development programmes, including on water issues, in addition to helping the Sudan benefit from the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative, and lift the unilateral sanctions against it.

Given the recognition by African and Arab countries of the role of the Sudan in water diplomacy, in October 2015 we chaired the meetings of the countries of the eastern Nile basin, through a unanimous agreement among participating countries. We also chair the Arab Water Council. Internationally, in October 2016 a Sudanese expert, Professor Seifeldin Hamad Abdallah, head of the technical body for water resources, received the UNESCO-IHE Alumni Award for his expertise in water resources. In the past, the Sudan chaired the international conference on Arab waters under Israeli occupation. All this is proof of the acknowledgment of the positive role played by the Sudan in this vital area.

The Sudanese delegation is convinced that the United Nations can play a pivotal role in guiding international efforts aimed at implementing sustainable development programmes on water and ensuring that this vital resource will be an element of cooperation among States and not a source of disputes between them, through broader use of preventive diplomacy.

We are also convinced that there have been a number of positive developments in today's world that could make regional and international cooperation on matters relating to water into a tangible reality, freeing this important resource away from the spectre of conflict. The most important of these developments is the tremendous scientific and technological progress made, which has helped humankind to accomplish things that had been unimaginable in previous generations. That technological revolution could result in an increase in water resources and greater efficiency in the use of water.

In another dimension, the universal trend towards emphasizing preventive diplomacy, as reflected in the recommendations of the report (see S/2015/446) of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and those in the report the Independent Commission on Multilateralism, opens wide the door to international cooperation in the area of water. This trend makes this vital resource a bridge for cooperation among peoples and States, rather than a source of disputes and wars.

The goal of ensuring that water serves as a means of cooperation among States is both possible and essential, but that will happen only if we show the necessary determination to avoid any and all conflict over water in future. That could be achieved through the following steps.

First, we need to increase the attention accorded to the issue of water resources in the United Nations and to promote cooperation among United Nations agencies and programmes in that regard.

Second, cooperation among developing countries on water resource management and its sustainable use should be strengthened.

Third, we need to increase the level of financial resources spent on research and development in areas related to greater water production, such as desalination and increasing the efficiency of use of aquifers.

Four, the transfer of technology on water resources to developing countries should be facilitated on concessional terms.

Five, the framework for institutional cooperation on water resources should be supported, especially in developing countries.

Six, we should support regional climate projects that contribute to the fight against desertification and increase level of precipitation — for example, the Great Green Wall, in which 11 African countries participate, stretching from Djibouti in the east to Senegal in the west.

Seven, we should strengthen international cooperation in scientific research into the effective use of water — for example developing drought-resistant crops, reducing the use of water in construction and industrial applications, minimizing water evaporation, waste-water treatment and dealing with polluted water.

Eight, we can establish a platform or a mechanism within the United Nations for those countries suffering from water scarcity to help them strengthen coordination and cooperation among themselves and to encourage an exchange of experiences and expertise.

Nine, we must intensify efforts aimed at helping those States that suffer from internal conflict to achieve peace and security and redirect resources consumed by war towards sustainable development programmes, including plans related to water.

My delegation is of the view that it is inappropriate to mention the so-called International Criminal Court in today's concept note (S/2016/969, annex). That is because the Court has no relationship whatsoever to the issue we are discussing. It is not even a body affiliated with the United Nations. More than 60 per cent of the inhabitants of the world are outside its jurisdiction. There are other mechanisms that are perfectly sufficient to achieve the desired goals in order to avoid prejudicing installations and water resources — for example, the Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses, adopted by the General Assembly in May 1997.

We noticed a regrettable tendency by States that support the Court to promote it and to attempt to forcibly and arbitrarily make it a part of the United Nations system by inserting paragraphs in United Nations draft resolutions that have nothing to do with the Court. Such actions are controversial and have led to profound polarization. Given the growing number of disputes among States relating to transboundary watercourses, we could have understood a reference to the International Court of Justice, since that is a legal body that is part of the United Nations and is entrusted with peacefully and legally resolving conflicts between States.

Finally, my delegation believes that, despite the current challenges presented by water resources, there are many opportunities to ensure that water becomes a positive element in regional and international cooperation. The ball is now in the court of developed countries to implement this lofty vision. The United Nations can play a leading role in guiding meaningful international efforts in that regard. My delegation hopes that the international community will make the right decision here and act within the framework of preventive diplomacy firmly, before it is too late and before water becomes a source of conflict in future.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Maldives.

Mr. Sareer (Maldives): Let me begin by thanking the Senegalese presidency for organizing this open debate on water, peace and security. For small island developing States such as the Maldives, this is a particularly important issue that merits discussion.

The briefers who spoke today already painted a striking picture of the gravity of the increasing pressures being placed both on limited water supplies and on national authorities to meet that growing demand. They highlighted the need for cooperation at the national, regional and global levels to counter the potential threats to international peace and security.

For the Maldives, a country made up of 1,192 islands across 26 atolls, at first glance it would seem that water supply would be the least of our problems. Indeed, we in the Maldives have long spoken of the threat posed by too much water — in the form of rising sea levels — far more than we have of too little. Being seawater, however, the oceans that surround us are not suitable for human consumption or agricultural use.

Traditionally, our water needs have been met by rainwater and the limited amounts of groundwater accessible by wells, but a growing population and increased urbanization have meant that those sources are no longer sufficient to meet demand.Today, much of the water consumed in the Maldives comes from

desalination. Furthermore, while groundwater supplies are recharged by rainfall, environmental pollution and waste mean that that water often becomes contaminated and must be treated before consumption, adding to already high costs and likewise creating dependence on water treatment plants.

The vulnerability of small island developing States in relation to water is immense. In the Maldives, for example, during the dry season each year, desalinated water has to be supplied from the capital to far-flung islands, ramping up costs and logistical difficulties for the Government. Similarly, in much of the Pacific this year, drought — largely caused by the naturally occurring El Niño phenomenon, whose effects and impacts are exacerbated by climate change — wreaked havoc on agricultural lands and livelihoods, impacting water and food security. It is often the case that the countries that are most affected are the least able to cope with the impacts and therefore most in need of support and partnerships.

Those unique constraints, however, have led my country, the Maldives, to explore compensatory practices and proactive responses to service interruptions. When a fire shut down the sole desalination plant in the capital island, Malé, in 2014, for example, the Government responded by distributing bottled water, water from temporary desalination plants and from mobile water-carrying vehicles, with special care taken to address the needs of vulnerable and at-risk populations. That was a huge cost to the Government, but we were fortunate to have the assistance of our international partners.

In 2014, the Government established the Malé Water Crisis Management Fund, with a view to dealing with future crises and strengthening the resilience of the existing system. Additionally, we found that in that crisis regional cooperation, as well as support of the international community at large, was necessary in helping the Government meet peak demand during the water shortage and for contributing to the Fund. The lessons from our experiences are threefold.

First, robust national mechanisms should be in place to meet water needs in times of demand spikes or supply shortages. The most effective measure in that regard is to ensure the regular water supply system is resilient and, where possible, decentralized, and that it utilizes a variety of sources. Moreover, clear steps should be in place for times of crisis.

Secondly, international cooperation and the sharing of best practices can provide much-needed insights and assistance in dealing with the challenges of meeting national water needs. The Security Council and the General Assembly can serve as invaluable forums for the exchange of relevant knowledge and policy tools. Water, by nature, is a cross-border, intercontinental force, and therefore requires truly international approaches and solutions.

Thirdly, the matter of water supply extends beyond the immediate issue of water. Climate change threatens to significantly reduce already strained sources of fresh water in regions all over the world. If we are to meet the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is imperative that we effectively slow the pace of climate change and related water depletion. On a more local level, small-scale pollution, salinization and poor sanitary measures can threaten the quality of existing water supplies and necessitate costly treatment. Awareness and education in water and sanitation, including management of services, can therefore have a larger-than-expected effect on water supply.

By taking those various elements into account, we may bring our nations closer to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals' targets on water and, in doing so, build more resilient, secure and peaceful societies. Today, an integrated, coordinated and holistic approach is required — one that spans the traditional divide between security and peace, development and humanitarian needs — in order to meet the changing, multifaceted nature of the challenges confronting our time.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Collard-Wexler (Canada) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to commend Senegal for the leadership it has shown on this important issue — here in the Security Council, in the United Nations-World Bank High-Level Panel on Water and in the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, as well as within the la Francophonie.

Increasingly, water issues, particularly in the context of climate change, are recognized as a major challenge of the twenty-first century with important security implications. Water has shaped human civilization. On it depends population settlements and migration, social and economic development and political dynamics. Water plays a fundamental role

in regulating the climate, agriculture and economic growth. An overabundance of water can lead to devastating floods, while water scarcity leads to drought. Both situations have significant implications.

In short, water lies at the heart of sustainable development. As water is a vital resource for agriculture, energy and health, it can also be a source of conflict and an instrument of war. The effective and inclusive governance of water can therefore contribute to the establishment of peace.

(*spoke in English*)

Water-related disputes between States have historically been resolved through diplomatic channels. However, the past will not necessarily be a good predictor of the future, as climate change will amplify existing water challenges at all levels.

Canada sees this open debate as an opportunity to shape and advance the water, peace and security agenda. Greater diplomatic engagement on water, peace and security is important. Our diplomats should continue to advance transboundary water agreements for a world facing future climate-change impacts and population growth. Our diplomats must be equipped with the means to monitor and expose the use of water as a tool of war as a precursor to action by formal institutions and mechanisms. Member States also need to work hand in hand with organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross to address the humanitarian implications of water in active conflict settings and to bring water into the toolkit of peacebuilding and mediation efforts.

Finally, water should be a key consideration in ongoing discussions on climate change adaptation and the resilience agenda, particularly within fragile States.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

Mrs. Nguyen (Viet Nam) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation to the Senegalese presidency for convening this importance open debate on water, peace and security.

(*spoke in English*)

Water is an indispensable and strategic resource. The inclusion of water in our Sustainable Development Goals demonstrates the broad recognition that water is essential for the well-being of humankind, food security, poverty reduction and sustainable development. At the same time, water can be a source of tension, instability and conflicts. As a result of the disparity between available water resources and the need for water, as well as the consequences of climate change, water shortages may affect half of the world population from now to 2050. Asia is an example, accounting for 61 per cent of the world's population but with only 36 per cent of available water resources. It is now the driest continent in per capita terms.

Viet Nam shares the common concerns about the negative impacts of the scarcity of water and unequal water distribution on economic development and social cohesion that may lead to domestic conflicts or conflicts among nations. Nevertheless, water is also a catalyst for cooperation. Viet Nam believes that transboundary water cooperation is a good way of addressing water-related challenges, as it ensures economic prosperity, fosters resilience, creates trust and enhances security. Collaborative water schemes can be a powerful measure to prevent conflict.

We are of the view that the United Nations can provide valuable assistance to countries that are facing challenges in the management of water. The United Nations can deploy preventive diplomatic efforts aimed at promoting and supporting regional cooperation on water management. We call on the Security Council to play an active role in preventing water-related conflicts by upholding international law and frameworks that help protect water security and water infrastructure, particularly the 1997 Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses.

It is also our view that developed countries need to support developing countries in technology transfer, capacity-building in water management and responding to the impacts of climate change on water resources.

We support the enhancement of global water governance. We look forward to the Budapest Water Summit later this month. We also hope that the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace and the Group of Friends of Water will continue the discussion on effective measures to prevent and resolve water-related conflicts.

Viet Nam is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change. We suffer from both floods and severe droughts. Viet Nam largely depends on transboundary water resources, as 63 per cent of our water resources come from neighbouring countries. Therefore, we highly value international, regional and subregional

cooperation frameworks on the management and use of transboundary water resources.

Viet Nam actively participates in water management frameworks in our region. It is encouraging that Mekong cooperation has been strengthened in recent years with diverse mechanisms such as the Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program, the Mekong River Commission, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Mekong Basin Development Cooperation, the Lower Mekong Initiative and the Summit Meeting between Japan and the Mekong River basin countries. The recent launch of the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Framework, which includes China, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam, was also a big step towards deepening cooperation in this field. We hope that the international community will continue to support Mekong cooperation for peace, security and sustainable development in the region, with full respect for the interests of riparian countries and the balance of economic, social and environmental dimensions.

The growing scarcity of water and water-related insecurity worldwide demand an urgent response and compel all of us to work together to address this issue. Our discussion today is very timely, as it helps develop political momentum to advance water cooperation and prevent water-related conflicts. Only this integrative approach will make it possible to achieve the objectives of our transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and transform water from a potential source of conflict to a source of cooperation and peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): At the outset, I would like to thank the Republic of Senegal for convening this important open debate on water, peace and security, in connection with the agenda item "Maintenance of international peace and security", and for submitting a concept note (S/2016/969, annex) on the topic. This issue is equally important for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The international community, including the Security Council, has increasingly been paying attention to the protection of natural resources in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding.

Water is indispensable for the survival of humankind. Attacks against, and limitations of access to, water resources during armed conflicts are frequently used as a method of warfare, including with a view to starving civilian populations or changing the demographic composition of a territory by displacing people or preventing them from returning to their homes and properties.

International humanitarian law provides for the protection of access to water in the context of the limitations imposed on military operations during armed conflicts. It also regulates the use of water resources and access to water in occupied territories. The principle of permanent sovereignty over natural resources also applies to occupied territories. Furthermore, it is recognized that the right to clean drinking water and sanitation is a human right, bringing into operation the relevant international legal instruments. It is important to consistently stress the critical need for the implementation by all Member States of international law applicable to the protection of the environment in areas affected by armed conflict, in line with their legal responsibilities.

The continued aggression by Armenia against Azerbaijan has led to the seizure of almost 20 per cent of the sovereign territory of my country. It has claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people, ruined cities and livelihoods and resulted in the forcible expulsion of more than 1 million Azerbaijanis from their homes and properties. It has also had a devastating impact on the environment, with destroyed forests, burned and degraded soil and polluted water resources.

Since the beginning of the aggression, the armed forces of Armenia have deliberately employed methods and means of warfare to cause widespread, long-term and severe damage to the environment of Azerbaijan, including its occupied territories, and to deprive hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijani citizens of water resources. The Sarsang reservoir — which was built in 1976 to supply drinking water to more than 500,000 people in the Upper and Lower Karabakh areas of Azerbaijan and irrigation water to more than 100,000 hectares of fertile land in the six districts of the Republic — has been under Armenian military occupation since 1993. The current technical condition of the Sarsang dam poses a serious threat to approximately 400,000 Azerbaijani citizens living downstream from it.

In its resolution 2085 (2016), adopted on 26 January 2016, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe described Armenia's actions as environmental aggression aimed at creating humanitarian and environmental problems for the citizens of Azerbaijan.

The Assembly warned of the serious threats of a disaster and a humanitarian crisis that the state of disrepair of the Sarsang dam posed to the whole area. In view of that urgent humanitarian problem, the Assembly demanded Armenia's immediate withdrawal from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and and that it stop using water resources as tools of political influence or instruments of pressure to its benefit. There is evidence of deliberate transboundary pollution in rivers from tailings originating in Armenia, which crosses the international border of Azerbaijan and ends up in its farmlands and forests.

Armenia bears full responsibility for its breaches of international law, including those that have caused damage to the environment of my country. That and Armenia's persistent refusal to start meaningful peace negotiations and its attempts to escalate the situation in the conflict zone once again confirm the need for urgent and effective action to invoke Armenia's responsibility through targeted efforts by the international community, which would bring an end to the impunity enjoyed by the aggressors and ensure the liberation of the Nagorno Karabakh region and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan from the Armenian occupation.

There can be no durable peace if the environment that sustains livelihoods is destroyed, polluted and barbarically exploited. It is critical to protect the environment in peacetime and during war and to cooperate in combating environmental crimes and the illegal exploitation of natural resources.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Begeç (Turkey): I, too, express our thanks to you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate, as well as to the briefers for their contributions.

Water is crucial for basic human needs, economic growth and sustainable development. The successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is essential for achieving universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation for all, eradicating poverty and hunger and improving water quality, while also protecting ecosystems. In that regard, the United Nations should focus on achieving the water-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets in a timely and effective manner.

Today, limited water resources in many regions are under pressure of rapidly growing demands from many sectors. They are not evenly distributed and often are not properly managed. Furthermore, climate change is affecting the availability of water in spatial and temporal terms, as well as the frequency of extreme hydrological events such as floods and droughts. In the coming decade, more than half of the world's population could be under water stress. The majority of those people will rely on transboundary rivers. The competing interests and demands on transboundary water resources may turn into a divisive issue among riparian countries.

However, while water is perceived as a source of tension, historically countries have tended to cooperate rather than fight over it. Turkey considers water to be an important means of cooperation and a bridge-builder. We support the equitable, reasonable and effective utilization of transboundary water resources, as well as the sharing of its benefits, through cooperation among riparian States. Water must be used in an efficient way through integrated water resources management at the basin level, and the benefits should be maximized. Confidence-building measures should be put in place in order to dispel mistrust and create an environment that is conducive to meaningful cooperation. In fact, each transboundary body of water has its own specific characteristic and peculiarities, and reflects economic, social and historical aspects of any particular region. Therefore, bilateral and riparian-only approaches are the most appropriate and result-oriented methods for addressing the issues regarding transboundary water resources.

Finally, guided also by our contractual obligations, water resources and infrastructure must be protected during armed conflicts, taking into account that water is a source of life. However, engaging in a dialogue on water as a confidence-building measure with the sole purpose of addressing political or armed conflicts may not always yield progress, and water issues that are pursued with a misplaced political agenda might even create further complications.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): I thank you, Mr. President, and the presidency of Senegal for convening this very important debate and for bringing this important issue to the forefront. My delegation would also like to thank the briefers for their comments, which, inter alia, highlight the need for improved water management and

conservation, with greater international cooperation on water.

Due to many factors — global climate change, the number and scale of natural disasters, the increase in human population, food shortages and water disputes within and between some countries — the issues related to the ownership and use of water are likely to gain more prominence. But many times it is not, and will not be, water that caused the disputes, but other unresolved conflicts and their effects, as pressures of population displacement lead to water disputes.

Being fundamental to human survival, water can arouse strong passions. However, it need not be a source of conflict if water resources and their use are governed prudently. But for that we must take a comprehensive approach to water. It is therefore critical that the milestone agreements forged last year — the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change — be implemented successfully. They will help ensure that conditions that could turn into conflicts over water are mitigated. Along with those, Indonesia supports agreements among States that require them to ensure that a clear methodology and dispute-resolution mechanism on watercourses are available.

Given that 70 per cent of global fresh water is used for agriculture, there should also be greater support given to developing countries that lack the capacities for developing their water conservation and agriculture production abilities.

Indonesia also takes strong exception to any parties in conflicts attacking water reservoirs and related infrastructure, which is discussed in the concept note (S/2016/969, annex). Using water as an instrument of war is reprehensible. There can never be a defence for knowingly or unknowingly targeting water, health services, food or other essential facilities for civilians. The Security Council must clearly uphold international humanitarian law. Furthermore, as Indonesia has stressed before in various United Nations forums, it is crucial that the Security Council and other relevant entities of the United Nations system significantly elevate principled conflict prevention, credible political solutions, dialogue processes and mediation to help resolve conflicts peacefully.

Sustainability is a key feature of Indonesia's medium-term development plan for the period 2015-2019, with the security of water, food, energy and maritime resources among its essential components. In the area of water security, we are pursuing clear targets in watershed conservation, water availability, access to drinking water and sanitation. While South-East Asia is generally self-sufficient in natural resources, there are varied conditions in the member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Seasonal scarcity and a rising demand for freshwater are realities. To ensure equitable access and sufficient amounts of water of acceptable quality, ASEAN — through its Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2009-2015, a strategic plan of action and the ASEAN Working Group on Water Resources Management — has effectively promoted regional cooperation and collaboration on integrated water resources management and will continue to intensify such efforts.

Indonesia is happy to share its insights and expertise on water resources management with interested countries. We also believe that United Nations agencies, particularly UN-Water, should play a substantially greater role to assist developing countries to address the multiple issues related to water.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ethiopia.

Mr. Tadesse (Ethiopia): I would like to start by commending you, Mr. President, for organizing today's open debate on water, peace and security. I would also like to thank Mr. Danilo Türk, Chair of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace; Ms. Christine Beerli, Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross; and Mr. Sundeep Waslekar, President of Strategic Foresight Group, for their briefings this morning. The concept note (S/2016/969, annex) is also helpful, but we would like to share some ideas about the kind of narrative that should be crafted for focusing on this topic.

The discussion on water, peace and security has essentially been framed in terms of the threats posed by water scarcity and the potential for water-related disputes. The concept note is also anchored in the premise that "water has always been considered as a driver of conflict". Of course, one cannot rule out the possibility of a dispute or disagreement over the utilization of shared water resources. That is only

natural, but conflict and violence are not necessarily inevitable. The lessons of history show that water can indeed be a source of cooperation rather than conflict. That is even more relevant to transboundary water resources, which provide an opportunity for cooperation in ensuring effective water management at the national and regional levels. It is that spirit that I believe should guide our discussion of the topic today.

For centuries, States have been striving to address water management challenges through cooperation and mutual understanding. Contrary to the arguments of those who ring the alarm bells about water security, it is a matter of record that no States have gone to war specifically over water resources. In fact, thousands of treaties have been signed in the past to manage shared water resources. That is why we in Ethiopia strongly believe that cooperation on water is indeed possible and is the only rational way forward for ensuring sustained development benefits for all States, based on the principle of the equitable and reasonable utilization of transboundary water resources.

It is in that context that Ethiopia has been participating in the Nile Basin Initiative and its Cooperative Framework Agreement, which was negotiated over a decade and has now been signed by six riparian States and ratified by three of them. Once the remaining three riparian States ratify it, a permanent river basin commission will be established. This kind of regional mechanisms is critical not only to reduce the risks of potential conflict but also to ensure that transboundary water resources are equitably shared among riparian States on a basis of win-win cooperation.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also recognizes critical role of water in inclusive and sustainable development, as articulated in Sustainable Development Goal 6 and in the water-related targets. The 2030 Agenda emphasizes the importance of water resource management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation.

We, the States Members of the United Nations, have also agreed, under the 2030 Agenda, to expand international cooperation and capacity-building for developing countries in water-related programmes. In addition, as the *United Nations World Water Development Report 2016* illustrates, sustainable water management, water infrastructure and access to safe, reliable and affordable water supplies are fundamental to eradicating poverty and ensuring sustainable peace and development for all countries. Though the adoption of those universal Goals and indicators is a step in the right direction, their implementation requires sustained political commitment, determination, long-term vision and effort on the part of all Governments and stakeholders. The promotion of cooperation also demands frank and constructive discussions among States and regional cooperation frameworks.

The discourse on water security has been dominated by inflammatory rhetoric, which tends to unnecessarily politicize the issue and does not foster constructive dialogue. What will help us address the challenge of water management in an equitable and sustainable manner is dialogue and collaboration conducted in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation. We very much hope that the outcome of our deliberations today will be geared towards that objective.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Armenia.

Mr. Mnatsakanyan (Armenia): Armenia would like to express its appreciation to the Senegalese presidency of the Security Council for initiating today's open debate and providing an excellent concept note (S/2016/969, annex) on the subject. We also thank the briefers for their thoughtful presentations earlier today.

The wide-ranging negative consequences of climate change and their significant impact on water resources have become palpable for societies and their health and economies and the natural environment. Meteorological records and climate projections provide abundant evidence of the vulnerability of water resources and the high cost for human societies and ecosystems.

Effective adaptation to climate change requires a cross-sectoral approach, including at the transboundary level. Transboundary bodies of water create hydrological, social and economic interdependencies among communities, societies and nations. They are vital to economic development, poverty reduction and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. Such interdependencies may have the potential for disputes and conflict, both within and between countries. Since growing populations, increased urbanization and economic development all require more water for agricultural, municipal and industrial uses, the risks become greater.

However, the recognition of mutual interests and mutual dependency should serve as the basis for

cooperation and the promotion of regional peace and security, as well as economic growth. Through various initiatives, Member States should be encouraged to focus on tipping the balance from potential conflict to cooperation. They should be supported in efforts to improve the management of transboundary water resources, including by strengthening joint efforts and actions. Arrangements for cooperation and joint actions should take into account the specifics of a given basin and duly reflect the range of environmental, hydrological, political, economic and social circumstances of each case. The recognition of mutual dependency, a strong political will and a genuine commitment to cooperation on the part of States are critical prerequisites for successful transboundary water management.

Armenia has consistently promoted and supported regional and subregional cooperation, including on environmental issues and transboundary water management. Such cooperation is a basis not only for addressing and advancing mutual interests between neighbouring nations; it also represents important confidence-building measures in situations of unresolved conflict. We would like to emphasize the potential of such cooperation in the broader context of promoting regional peace and security, as well as economic growth.

In that context, it is regrettable that we heard another exercise of pouring scorn on Armenia and accusations by the delegation of Azerbaijan. This time, the usual accusations have been shaped in the context of water-sharing. I would agree with the Ambassador of Azerbaijan that indeed the Sarsang reservoir is located on the Tartar River of the Martakert region of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic. It was formed by the dam of the Sarsang hydroelectric power plant built in 1976, with a capacity of 560 million cubic metres and a height of 126 metres. The Sarsang reservoir, which is of key importance for the economy of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic primarily for the purposes of agricultural and generating electricity, is under the constant surveillance and control of the relevant authorities of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic. All maintenance and repair work is regularly carried out in a timely manner, and there has not been a single emergency situation that might pose a threat to people and the environment.

As a gesture of good will, the Nagorno Karabakh authorities have repeatedly proposed a water-sharing mechanism and more efficient use of the water resources of Nagorno Karabakh with Azerbaijan, which could also serve as a confidence-building measure between the parties to the conflict.

That is the situation concerning the Sarsang reservoir. Although Nagorno Karabakh is proposing concrete actions, the Azerbaijani side prefers to promote groundless accusations and dubious evidence that — as a matter of fact and to put it mildly — represent misinformation. Instead of promoting caviar diplomacy, we encourage the delegation of Azerbaijan and its authorities to do a favour for the region and invest their diplomatic efforts in the resolution of the conflict within the agreed framework.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Zehnder (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland thanks you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on water, peace and security, and for bringing this important issue to the attention of the Security Council. We welcome Ms. Christine Beerli, Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross; Mr. Danilo Türk, Chair of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace; and Mr. Sundeep Waslekar, President of Strategic Foresight Group. We thank them for their contributions.

To date, water has been linked primarily with two of the three pillars of the United Nations. The international community thus recognizes the fundamental connection between water and sustainable development and between water and human rights. On the other hand, the connection between water and the United Nations peace and security pillar has as yet not been fully explored and recognized by the Security Council and the international community. Switzerland believes that that connection is key and must be further explored.

On the one hand, competition for access to water can cause or fuel conflicts at both local and regional levels. Water-related problems often affect countries that are already in a fragile state and can exacerbate social tensions and weaken States. The challenges linked to water are also compounded by the effects of climate change and can cause increased regional tensions. Finally, cutting off the water supplies has become an instrument of war with disastrous consequences for civilian populations.

On the other hand, water possesses an important potential as a source of cooperation and peace. That

is the case with transboundary cooperation with regard to water. There are many examples, such as the transboundary cooperation for the Rhine and the Senegal River Basin Development Organization. Collaborative water activities can also be an effective measure to prevent conflicts. Water can therefore serve as an entry point when other elements make dialogue between parties difficult.

A number of efforts to strengthen the link between water, peace and security are currently being carried out at the international and regional levels. First, a draft resolution on water, peace and security is currently being negotiated within the International Organization of la Francophonie, based on a proposal put forward by Senegal and Switzerland. Secondly, a high-level side event was held on the margins the seventy-first session of the General Assembly. That event facilitated raising awareness about the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, which will publish its preliminary findings by end of this year and its final recommendations in 2017. Finally, international Geneva hosts several actors working actively on the connection between water and peace, such as the Geneva Water Hub, which provides input for the Panel's work, as well as the Group of Friends of the High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, with approximately 40 participating Member States.

Switzerland believes that the issue of water, peace and security must be included on the United Nations political agenda in the same manner as the link between water and development and that between water and human rights have been. We believe that the United Nations, in collaboration with regional organizations, has a major role to play in the area. It is particularly in the interest of the Council to address water-related issues from a preventive perspective, that is, when such issues can lead to conflict and destabilization threatening international peace and security.

Experience shows us that water offers enormous potential in terms of peace and cooperation. For those reasons, we strongly hope that the various activities launched to address the issue of water, peace and security will be acknowledged by the Council and contribute to its work in the future.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7819

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7819th meeting

Wednesday, 23 November 2016, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Seck	(Senegal)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

Security Council mission

Briefing by Security Council mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola (10 to 14 November 2016)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council mission

Briefing by Security Council mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola (10 to 14 November 2016)

The President (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by the Permanent Representatives of the two countries that co-led the Security Council mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola, namely, France and Angola.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of France to make a statement on the Security Council's mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): First and foremost, allow me to warmly thank the Secretariat, in particular the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), for having made possible the Security Council's mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola from 11 to 14 November. I would also like to thank the Senegalese presidency. We would like to continue working with the Secretariat to learn all that we can from that important mission. I also sincerely thank Angola for the solid partnership we forged as we travelled from Kinshasa to Beni and then to Luanda. I will focus my remarks on our visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Security Council visited that country in order to have discussions with national stakeholders about the country's current political situation, given the recent unrest caused by the delay in the electoral process, as well as about the security challenges related, in particular to protecting civilians and combating armed groups in the east of the country. As I mentioned, the Council visited Kinshasa and Beni, in North Kivu. In Kinshasa, the Security Council met with a wide range of actors. In particular, the Council met with the President, the Prime Minister, representatives of the presidential majority, the opposition that signed the 18 October agreement and those that did not sign it. We were also able to meet with the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (CENCO), representatives of human rights organizations, youth associations and women's associations. We also had a very useful exchange with the leadership of MONUSCO. In Beni, the Council was able to meet with the different representatives of MONUSCO, the Governors of North and South Kivu as well as the Mayor of Beni and the commanders of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo. The Council also met with representatives of local populations who were victims of the recent atrocities.

To try to draw with the main lessons of the mission, the mission made it possible for the Security Council to convey two messages. The first message was that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is at a turning point in its history: for the first time, a peaceful transition of power following President Kabila's term is possible. This in itself is reason for hope, but to achieve it all the political forces of the country will need to unite in order to respond to the wishes of the Congolese people. Dialogue remains the best possible way to overcome the differences that remain. The second message that we were able to convey was that holding free, fair, credible, open, transparent and peaceful elections as soon as possible, in accordance with the Congolese Constitution, is something that everyone is expecting. It is now up to all political forces to ensure that the country remains on the path of peace and of strengthening its democratic institutions.

In response to those messages, which were delivered in a very united way by all members of the Security Council, all the Council's interlocutors expressed their wish to avoid a new episode of violence after the tragic events of 19 and 20 September 2016. They assured us of their readiness to continue discussions following the 18 October agreement in a more sweeping and inclusive framework to reach a clear and precise road map based on a broad consensus that would make it possible to achieve a transition within a specific timetable.

The Security Council clearly encouraged all actors to continue these discussions so that the electoral process could take place in a peaceful climate and in a spirit of consensus that brings together all the political forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Council also encouraged the parties to take the necessary confidence-building measures, such as the suspension of judicial proceedings undertaken for political ends, freeing political prisoners, a clear commitment by everyone to respecting the Constitution, and the

opening of the political space to allow for discussions to be held in peaceful conditions and come to a quick and positive conclusion.

The Council also called for this process to be accompanied by a free and constructive political debate, where freedom of opinion, assembly and fair access to the media are guaranteed and where security and freedom of movement are also ensured. The Security Council called on the Congolese authorities to restore the broadcast signal of Radio France Internationale and to lift the ban on demonstrations. It also called on the opposition forces, for their part, to act responsibly and ensure that their demonstrations would be peaceful.

That is the overall message that together the 15 members of the Council transmitted to all the political actors that we met. Compromises will be necessary on both sides, and we hope that the spirit of responsibility in the political leaders will prevail. The mediation currently being carried out by CENCO deserves our support. It has the potential to bring the parties to the compromise necessary for the Democratic Republic of the Congo to experience a peaceful transition after 19 December.

The Council remains aware of the situation of the civilian populations in the east of the country. Everything must be done to protect them. This was also an essential component of our visit. The Security Council visited Beni for the first time in order to express its solidarity with the victims of the recent violence. We attached particular interest to making this point. The atrocities committed in the region over the past two years are a challenge for all of us, for human dignity, for peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the region as a whole.

In eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there will be no lasting security as long as illegal armed groups continue to operate in the region. The Council was able to see that this is a problem that requires a comprehensive response: it will have a military aspect, thanks to MONUSCO and to the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo, which are fighting on the ground, as well as political and legal aspects, in the form of combating illegal trafficking in natural resources and shutting down the predatory networks that enable these groups to survive and of prosecuting perpetrators of atrocities. Collaboration among the countries of the region is essential to achieve those objectives.

In that context, the Council expressed its strong support for MONUSCO, which had been targeted on 8 November by an unprecedented attack. We also heard the message of representatives of civil society in Beni, which called for the Mission to be more effective. It must indeed adapt to the new challenges and show greater robustness and flexibility in order to be as effective as possible. This was the subject of the Council's discussions with the commanders of MONUSCO, and we will pursue this task in coordination with the Secretariat. The Security Council has great confidence in MONUSCO, which can count on the Council's support in this phase where it must adapt to new challenges.

Those are some of the main conclusions and lessons learned that I wanted to call to your attention, Mr. President.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Angola to make a statement on the visit of the Security Council to Angola.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): I would like to start by joining my colleague, the Permanent Representative of France, Mr. François Delattre, in thanking, first, the presidency of the Security Council and, next, all colleagues who joined us in the mission to both the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola.

I am very honoured to report to the Council on the outcome of the Angolan segment of the Security Council mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola on 13 and 14 November. The mission exchanged views with the authorities of Angola, which currently chairs the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region, on ways to prevent the aggravation of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The mission was therefore essentially a mission that, I think we agreed, was intended to be of a preventive character.

The first meeting was with the First Vice-President, Mrs. Joana Lina Ramos, who is in charge of the National Assembly of Angola, and members of the Commission for External Relations and the National Security Commission. The Deputy Permanent Representative of France, Mr. Alexis Lamek, and I, as leaders of the mission, outlined the mission's objective, namely, to discuss with Angolan authorities measures to ensure a serious commitment by the main political actors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to overcome the political impasse, to help restore confidence among the political players and to create conditions for an inclusive

dialogue leading the country to the holding of fair, democratic and transparent elections and permitting the peaceful transfer of power. The Council again urged the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to respect the Constitution and the rule of law in the country and encouraged them to pursue stabilization and pacification through an inclusive and democratic dialogue favouring the holding of free, transparent and credible elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Vice-President of the Angolan Parliament highlighted that the Angolan authorities are aware of and concerned about the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with all of its potential negative impact on Angola and the rest of the region. They are therefore advocating an inclusive dialogue in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, citing Angola as an example — a country that was torn apart by nearly 30 years of armed conflict that took thousands of lives, but was nevertheless able to reach peace and national reconciliation primarily through dialogue.

The mission met then with the Vice-President of the Republic of Angola, Mr. Manuel Vicente, accompanied by the Minister of State and Chief of Security, Mr. Vieira Dias, Junior., the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Georges Chikoti, and Secretary for Diplomatic Affairs of the President, Mr. Carlos Fonseca. During the meeting, the Security Council mission argued for the need to prevent the Democratic Republic of the Congo from plunging into chaos and violence, a situation that could affect all neighbouring countries and the region as a whole. The Vice-President of Angola assured the Security Council mission that Angola was monitoring the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with great attention and concern, stressing that the Angolan Government had expressed its position on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo in a statement that was issued two days before the arrival of the Council mission to Luanda, and that declaration, which was shared with the members of the Council, reaffirming Angola's policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and stressing that peace and stability in that country must be preserved, as it is crucial for regional peace and security, especially for Central Africa.

Angola's declaration further expressed the conviction that the political dispute must be resolved through dialogue and not through violence or any other illegitimate means, and called on the parties to maintain the dialogue and negotiations, and to avoid confrontation and violence at all costs. The Vice-President assured the mission that Angola, in its capacity as President of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, as well as a neighbouring country and friend of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, will remain available to work with the international community, in particular with the Security Council, for the stabilization of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In our final meeting with the diplomatic corps accredited to Angola, the mission reaffirmed the need for consensus on an electoral calendar and confidence-building measures by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the importance of a peaceful transition from the Government of President Kabila, after the holding of transparent, democratic and fair elections.

In conclusion, the Council mission and its Angolan interlocutors agreed to make efforts to help the Democratic Republic of the Congo to get through the difficult period that the country is going through and to do their utmost to promote a fruitful political dialogue, respect the rule of law and establish a credible electoral calendar — all in the interests of peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Central African region. Also, I would mention the shared idea that the Council is the primary instrument to help the region, and particularly the countries of the Great Lakes region, bring about peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with a common vision, shared between the Council and the countries of the region, specifically Angola.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Security Council, I thank all members of the Council and the Secretariat who participated in the mission for the outstanding manner in which they discharged the important responsibilities conferred upon them.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7820

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7820th meeting

Wednesday, 23 November 2016, 10.25 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Seck	(Senegal)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramirez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with article 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General; and Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Mladenov.

Mr. Mladenov: As we sit here today, the continuing status quo in the occupied Palestinian territory reduces the prospect for sustainable and just peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Rarely have the risks to the two-State solution been greater than today. How many times have we said in this Chamber that we must move past the blatant obstructionism, the false starts and the perpetual claims that the time is simply not right for action? Inaction has a cost, one measured in human lives and suffering. The situation on the ground is changing steadily — dangerously — as proponents of Israeli settlement expansion feel emboldened, internal divisions among Palestinians flare up and the prospect of a future Palestinian State comes under threats like never before.

The proponents of the status quo, the critics of the two-State solution, offer no viable alternative that meets the legitimate national and historic aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians. The alternative is an open-ended occupation, a perpetual conflict that breeds anger among the people of Palestine and Israel and fuels radicals across a Middle East already torn by ethnic and religious strife.

Socioeconomic despair, underpinned by the persistent hardships of the occupation and fragile democratic institutions, is affecting stability in the West Bank and threatening to erode the achievements of the Palestinian State-building agenda. The stark reality is most visible in the Palestine refugee camps, which remain a symbol of the failure to produce a sustainable political solution to end the conflict and Palestinian suffering.

I visited the West Bank city of Nablus twice this month to meet with the Governor, as well as with residents and representatives of the Balata refugee camp. Established in 1950 to serve approximately 5,000 refugees, Balata today is the home of almost 30,000 people, living on just 0.25 square kilometres of land. Some 50 per cent of its residents are reportedly unemployed, the majority of them youths. Poverty and food insecurity rates are the highest in the West Bank. The harsh conditions, combined with regular Israeli incursions and the lack of a permanent home, create the potential for violence.

With growing political tension in the West Bank over the past months, we have witnessed a series of clashes between Palestinian security forces and residents of the camp and the nearby old city. Regrettably, during recent operations, one woman caught in the crossfire was killed and 15 people were injured, including four security personnel.

The Palestinian Authority has an obligation to maintain law and order, including in the refugee camps, which they continue to do effectively and professionally under very challenging circumstances. It is critical that, should force be used, it be used judiciously. Those charged or arrested must be afforded due judicial process and treated equally under Palestinian law.

The problems in the camps are a reflection of the deep social economic and political challenges, the resolution of which is not in the hands of the vulnerable Palestine refugees; rather, it is foremost in the hands of Palestinian and Israeli political leaders. Left without hope and mired in poverty, Palestine's most traumatized — its refugees — have seen their needs outpace the resources available to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Generations of residents have been educated by UNRWA and thousands have gained employment and a sense of security through its various activities. The most destitute have benefitted from its relief programme. I appeal to the international community to support UNRWA so that it can carry out its activities effectively and predictably. I welcome the generous commitments made by the United Arab Emirates

and Kuwait, in addition to Canada's resumption of support for UNRWA. That support is indispensable to maintaining the lives of Palestine refugees and to the stability of the region.

The situation in the camps, however, is only part of the story. If current socioeconomic trends continue, the potential for serious deterioration of the situation in the West Bank will grow. The Palestinian Authority faces fiscal difficulties, as international assistance this year is down by some 30 per cent. The Palestinian Authority is dependent upon Israel for clearance revenues, and on the international community for financial support. Economic development in the West Bank remains constrained by Israeli restrictions on access to the most fertile lands, water and mineral resources in Area C, which constitutes approximately 60 per cent of the West Bank.

While Israel has made important positive gestures, including retroactively legalizing two Palestinian schools and advancing a community outline plan for a Palestinian village in Area C near Jenin, such steps are only the beginning. They need to be expanded and encouraged. I welcome the important discussions being held between the parties on critical issues, such as water and electricity, that build on agreements from the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting in September here in New York.

While progress is being made, it remains slow. It is critical that these discussions become operational realities in order to meet the dire needs of the West Bank and Gaza. It is in no one's interest to allow the Palestinian economy and stability to crumble. Only significant policy shifts by Israel and actions by the Palestinians to strengthen their institutions and the rule of law can sustainably reverse this cause.

In its July report (see S/2016/595), the Middle East Quartet underscored the need for Palestinian unity: a single, democratic and legitimate Government that unites Gaza and the West Bank. That remains critical for the fulfilment of Palestinian national aspirations. Sadly, that unity continues to remain an elusive goal.

On 29 November, Fatah is scheduled to hold its seventh party conference. That should be used as an opportunity for promoting unity, for strengthening the mainstream centre of Palestinian politics and paving the way for elections. I urge all to conduct the proceedings in a fully transparent and representational manner that encourages moderate voices and respects opposing views.

Recent developments in Israel are increasingly worrying. Last week, despite strong opposition, the so-called legalization bill passed a preliminary vote in the Knesset. If adopted, the bill would enable the expansion of illegal settlements and outposts on private Palestinian land. If ratified, it would constitute a breach of international law and, according to Israel's own Attorney General, would also be unconstitutional.

Today, the local planning committee in Jerusalem decided to advance plans for 500 new housing units in the existing settlement of Ramat Shlomo, further encroaching into the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Beit Hanina. I once again urge Israel to adhere to the repeated calls to cease illegal settlement construction in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

In recent weeks, Israel has also conducted over 80 demolitions of Palestinian structures in Area C and East Jerusalem, for a lack of building permits that are next to impossible to obtain. In this latest round 122 people have been displaced. This year to date, over 1,020 structures have been demolished, which is nearly twice last year's total.

Let me now turn to Gaza, where I continue to be deeply concerned by the continuing militant buildup, smuggling and increased restrictions on the movement of people and goods in and out of the Strip. As I briefed the Security Council last month (see S/PV.7792), the amount of construction materials entering Gaza is woefully inadequate to meet the vast reconstruction needs.

Due to limitations by Israel on imports of materials and approvals of construction projects, the volume of such building materials — primarily cement — has now fallen well behind demand. This creates tensions among approved beneficiaries over the limited availability in the market. At today's import rates, it would take at least seven months to clear the current backlog of 33,000 households in Gaza that have been approved to purchase cement to repair or reconstruct their housees. Thousands of households have been waiting for months to access the material they need, and economic activity in the Gaza strip is slowing ominously.

In October, at least 50 per cent of permit applications to exit Gaza were denied for national staff of international aid agencies alone, in sharp contrast to

the average of less than 5 per cent of denials in 2015. That has significant impacts on the ability of the United Nations and the humanitarian community to deliver and monitor ongoing programmes. While acknowledging Israel's security concerns, I urge it to address this pressing issue without delay.

I also welcome recent Egyptian efforts to relieve the suffering of the people in Gaza. The opening of the Rafah Border Crossing for 10cdays this month enabled thousands of people, including students and those seeking urgent medical attention, to cross into Egypt, and over 2,000 Palestinians to return back home to the Gaza strip.

I now turn briefly to Lebanon. Since the Council was last briefed, on 10 November, there have been further signs of the country overcoming its political crisis. Following the election of President Aoun, progress has been made towards the formation of a Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Saad Hariri. It is hoped that this positive momentum will translate into a full reactivation of institutions, including parliamentary elections by May 2017.

The situation in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) area of operations remains unchanged, mostly quiet with some violations by both sides. The UNIFIL investigation into a firing incident across the Blue Line on 26 October near Kafer Kela is ongoing. In a tripartite meeting, Israel and Lebanon reaffirmed their commitments to calm and stability along the Blue Line.

On the Golan, I remain concerned by the current precarious situation, which undermines the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement and clearly jeopardizes the ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic. I urge both parties to maintain liaison with the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force and to refrain from any action that could escalate the situation across the ceasefire line and the already volatile regional environment.

As the situation in the West Bank continues to deteriorate, as Gaza's chronic challenges show little sustainable progress, and as the voices of extremism on all sides intensify their efforts to destroy any remaining hope for the two-State solution, I would like to conclude with a call to both parties and all stakeholders to stand up to those promoting a hate-driven agenda that threatens to prolong this conflict. A carefully worded statement or a well-crafted speech will not reverse the current trajectory. What people long for is concrete action. They need to see a plan to rebuild trust and create the conditions for a return to meaningful negotiations by focusing on positive changes on the ground and an engagement with the region. They need the international community to restate its consensus that the two-State solution is the only outcome that legitimately meets the national aspirations of both peoples, and to speak clearly against the obstacles to peace: settlements, the taking of land, violence and incitement. They need to hear from us that development cannot be a substitute for statehood and that democracy, human rights and the rule of law must be respected. They need courageous Israeli and Palestinian leaders who together can chart a clear strategy to peace and security.

I urge all those who are committed to ending the conflict, including the Council, to consider carefully what it will take to advance the prospects for peace, and to begin, in consultation with the parties, to develop an agreed path forward. Time is running out. Palestinians and Israelis deserve to live in peace; we must spare no effort in helping them reach that goal. As ever, the United Nations remains committed to advancing that objective.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Mladenov for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: I thank my colleague Mr. Nickolay Mladenov for his authoritative and comprehensive briefing, and I shall complement his remarks on the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. Last month, I also provided an overview of the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory (see S/PV.7792). Today, I will focus my remarks on the increasing challenges humanitarian actors are facing in responding to the needs of those vulnerable Palestinians, and for which we need greater support from the Council.

In the occupied Gaza Strip, 70 per cent of the population currently receives some form of international assistance, mostly food aid. Yet our ability to deliver that assistance has become increasingly restricted. Israel bans or restricts the import of certain goods into Gaza, on the grounds that they have a dual military and civilian purpose. Affected items range from communications equipment to cement, wood and even water pumps, fire trucks and medical X-ray machines. Mr. Mladenov has already spoken about the growing

and dramatic gap between how much material Israel is permitting to be imported to Gaza through the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, and the growing waiting lists of beneficiaries. That translates very directly into the humanitarian realm, with 60,000 highly vulnerable, displaced persons in Gaza still waiting for their home sto be rebuilt, who need rental assistance and much more in the interim.

It is not just about concrete. Urgent projects, which aim to reduce the risk of flooding that threatens nearly 500,000 people as winter approaches, have been on hold for 10 months as they await clearance of equipment. Projects to rehabilitate water wells and the construction of a neonatal intensive care unit are other examples of urgent needs suffering unnecessary long delays.

Aid workers have also been caught up in the increased restrictions. United Nations staff in Gaza require a permit to leave Gaza in order to meet with their managers in Jerusalem or Ramallah, or to attend training programmes elsewhere. While those permits were relatively easy to receive in previous years, when never more than 10 per cent were typically rejected, last month more than half of our United Nations applicants were turned away, with some advised not to apply again for 12 months. No explanation other than "security" is cited, leaving us at a loss as to how to respond and with a growing morale problem. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), embassies and others are experiencing similar trends.

Those new access restrictions are hitting other Gaza residents hard as well, of course; over half of the 2,000 permit applications by patients seeking urgent medical treatment outside Gaza in October, most typically for cancer treatment, were not approved by Israel. Inside Gaza, the operating space for NGOs is also difficult. The de facto authorities, Hamas, regularly seek to do audits, review staff or beneficiary lists or introduce new permit requirements and restrictions on work in certain areas of the Strip. NGOs need to resist those pressures and navigate anti-terrorist legislation set up by many Member States, which generate their own restrictions on the type of programming that is allowed and with whom one can and cannot engage.

The ongoing internal divisions between the Palestinian authorities in the West Bank and those in Gaza also inevitably transfer an increasing burden onto humanitarian actors and humanitarian budgets, as unstaffed operating theatres, dilapidated equipment and breaks in fuel supplies take their toll on people and services.

Ultimately, real progress in Gaza requires a full lifting of the blockade by Israel, in line with the resolutions of the Council and the General Assembly. Until that happens, Israel must ensure that items needed for reconstruction, relief and emergency preparedness are allowed entry, and that aid workers are able to move about to do their vital work.

While it is not a substitute for the opening of access to Israel, we also look to Egypt, in line with its own security considerations, to maintain the welcome increase in openings at the Rafah Border Crossing, which remains, literally, a life line for some. We must also see greater action from Palestinian leaders in Ramallah and Gaza; internal differences must be resolved for the sake of Palestine's most vulnerable constituents.

In the occupied West Bank, as the pressures increase on communities in Area C, so too do the obstacles to our operations there as well. As I have reported to the Council before, the pace of demolitions and confiscations of Palestinian property by the Israeli authorities has far exceeded any previous years on record — more than double this year as compared to 2015. Those have occurred mainly within herding communities in Area C, which count among Palestine's most vulnerable households. Obstruction to our operations in those areas is occurring in the most egregious way, with our relief items themselves frequently demolished or confiscated by Israeli forces. The rate of demolition or seizure of such donor-funded relief is on a trajectory to potentially triple as compared to 2015. Affected relief items include shelters and tents, water cisterns, animal pens and other basic structures for survival and livelihoods.

More fundamentally, Palestinians in Area C are living in an increasingly coercive environment that is created by discriminatory planning policies, demolitions, the active promotion of plans to relocate Bedouin to new townships and other practices that generate miserable living conditions and create pressure on people to move elsewhere. Much of that occurs in the line of sight of new or expanding Israeli settlements, which are illegal under international law, as reiterated by successive resolutions by the Council. About a quarter of the structures targeted this year were in Palestinian Bedouin communities located within or

near the area allocated to the E-1 settlement expansion project on the outskirts of occupied East Jerusalem.

It is critical that the interests of those vulnerable Bedouin communities be placed first. They need and deserve our unequivocal support to resist those coercive pressures by the occupying Power, and must not be burdened by still more pressures from Palestinian leaders, some of whom appear to view those communities as a key battleground in Palestine's long struggle. Those vulnerable civilians have no place as instruments in a political strategy.

I reiterate the Secretary-General's call to Israel to end the policies and practices that place those Palestinians at risk of forcible transfer. I also remind the Palestinian authorities of the need to respect the principles of independence, impartiality, neutrality and humanity, which are the bedrock of the humanitarian imperative.

The continued lack of a resolution to the core drivers of the ongoing humanitarian crisis has left Palestinians stuck in a perpetual cycle of humanitarian relief, increasingly dependent on assistance and facing an ongoing lack of respect for their rights and heightened instability. We need a coherent international response that will enhance the protection of civilians and deliver accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. That is especially important in the absence of an active political process between Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

Israel, the main duty-bearer, is a signatory to the Fourth Geneva Convention and has clear obligations as an occupying Power, and both Israel and Palestine have ratified the major human rights treaties. They are bound by customary international law as well, as are all countries. The members of the Security Council have a vital role to play in motivating the parties to respect their obligations. Similarly, all parties to the Geneva Conventions have an obligation not only to respect them but also to ensure that others respect them.

The challenges facing Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory, and the challenges that humanitarian personnel face in trying to assist them, require action not only by the Israeli and Palestinian authorities but by every member of the Council. If we want to prevent further deterioration in a region already overwhelmed with humanitarian emergencies, the Council's decisive collective action is vital. If it would help the members of the Council to have a specific list of humanitarian relief actions that should be taken or avoided, I and my colleagues will be pleased to provide it.

However, those actions notwithstanding, the principles of international humanitarian law do and must must apply. That includes all members of the Council, all those in the occupied Palestinian territory, both Israelis and Palestinians, and all who have signed international legal obligations to which they are, and must be held, accountable. We look to the Council to ensure greater respect for obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law and to enhance the protection of civilians. We look to the Council to safeguard the operational space that aid workers require to provide assistance to those most in need. And we look to the Council to address the underlying driver of Palestine's protection crisis through a political resolve to end the occupation, which is now approaching its fiftieth anniversary.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank Mr. Mladenov and Mr. O'Brien for their testimony, which is considerably more than briefings, being testament to something that we cannot even describe as déjà vu, since déjà vu implies a static situation. The current situation is not static; it is simply deteriorating.

We listened very carefully to Mr. O'Brien's most recent testimony. There was a moment during it when I was not sure whether I was listening to him talk about Israel, Gaza and Palestine, or about Syria, the Sudan, South Sudan or Yemen, because the obstacles to development and the tasks being carried out by United Nations entities in the field and to humanitarian assistance are things that we have so many times denounced in the Council with regard to the Sudan, South Sudan and Yemen. They are the same. A Government is blocking the work that the Council has been trying to do through numerous missions and for many years.

Therefore, in the same way, and with the same passion with which my delegation has asked other Governments to stop interrupting and interfering with the provision of assistnance by the United Nations, we

urge the same thing of the Government of Israel and, in appropriate cases, the Palestinian Authority. The Security Council cannot treat people differently. We have heard other impassioned statements denouncing the desperate situations that result from the decreased access for humanitarian aid, to various areas of Syria, for example. Mr. Mladenov and Mr. O'Brien are using the same narrative with regard to the Palestinian people. We therefore appeal to the authorities in this particular conflict that they stop such activities.

Uruguay is concerned about the total lack of progress in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, with its humanitarian, political and security implications for both countries and the region as a whole. We once again affirm our support for the right of Israel and Palestine to live in peace, within secure and recognized borders, in an atmosphere of renewed cooperation, free of any threat or act that could threaten peace. We also support a solution based on two independent States, convinced that that is the only option that can enable Israel and Palestine to peacefully coexist. It is up to the parties to create the conditions necessary for a resumption of negotiations and to take action and adopt policies that demonstrate their commitment to a two-State solution. They should also refrain from taking unilateral decisions that hinder dialogue and that they comply with their obligations under international law.

Uruguay remains concerned about the Israeli authorities' continuing decisions to build settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory in the West Bank, as well as their policy of demolishing Palestinian homes and buildings. We have to point out once again that the settlements are illegal under international law, and we urge Israel to stop this practice. We also reiterate our firm condemnation of acts of terrorism and their glorification, as well as the incidents in which unarmed Palestinians have died at the hands of Israeli security forces.

We reiterate that the only formula in the search for peace is direct bilateral negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians, which would finallhy allow an end to this conflict, still unresolved almost seven decades after it began.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting. Following Uruguay's example, I wish to briefly express some views before the discussion on this item in closed consultations. I thank Mr. Mladenov and Mr. O'Brien for their briefings.

We stress once again — as we do every month when we hear yet another report on what is happening — that the tragedy in Palestine is the longest-lasting case with no resolution by the Security Council. We have beaten the Council's sad record of lack of ability or political will to reach a positive response to the tragedy that the Palestinian people are suffering.

We would like to voice our deepest rejection of and indignation at the State of Israel's permanent policy of aggression towards the Palestinian people and its occupation of their territory. It is surprising that Israel is one of probably only two or three countries in the world that disregard Security Council resolutions, and that in violation of all United Nations resolutions, including the Council's, it has continued to move forward, in as flagrant and illegal manner, with a policy of colonizing Palestinian territory. The status quo is unsustainable, as every delegation in the Security Council has said, but it continues to dig itself in deeper and weaken the possibility of a two-State solution.

We reiterate that the occupation of Palestine requires re-establishing the full rights of the Palestinian people to their self-determination and independence, as well as Israel's withdrawal from all occupied territories to the pre-1967 borders. We once again reject the settlement policy of the occupying Power. Israeli settlements are not only illegal and run counter to all international law and resolutions but — worse yet — are also part of an ongoing strategy by the occupying Power aimed at colonizing Palestinian territory and expelling Palestinians from their land. We think that the recent decisions by the Israeli Government to attempt to use legal subterfuge to justify settlement expansions requires a resounding response by the Security Council.

We do not know for how long we will be able to ask Palestine to continue to be patient or how long we can ask the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people to continue to wait until the Security Council agrees upon a strategy. This is a situation in which the Security Council is shirking its responsibility. As an elected member of the Security Council until 31 December, and given that many States here are involved in dealing with the question of Palestine, including, in particular, Senegal, which co-chairs the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and is the African representative

of the Arab people, we believe that time is right for the Council to at least adopt a draft resolution that denounces the settlements as illegal and insists that Israel comply with international law.

I want to underscore that at the latest informal consultations we held with representatives of Israeli civil society, one of the participants said that part of the problem and the reason for which Israeli Governments acts with impunity is that there is no international response to the violations of the provisions of the Security Council and the United Nations. There is no response, and the Israeli authorities therefore are acting as though they have the support or, at least, the green light of some of the members of the Security Council. We would like to make a particular appeal to the United States delegation. Although we are in a transition period between Administrations, President Obama is still in power and perhaps has a last opportunity to say something in favour of the Palestinian people, legality and the rule of law.

Lastly, we would be remiss if we failed to mention the humanitarian situation in the occupied territories and the situation marked by extraordinary violence that the occupying Power exerts upon the Palestinian people. More than 7,000 Palestinians are held in Israeli prisons. More than 700 men, women and children are subject to administrative detention. We want to speak out in particular on behalf of the Palestinian children who are subject to military tribunal simply because they are voicing their ire and opposition to the Israeli occupation and ongoing Israeli violence against their people. We would also like to say that, through the settlements policy and their expansion, great prominence is being given to a very aggressive group, that is, extremist settlers, who carry out daily acts oppression and violence against the Palestinian people.

Finally, we once again call on all members of the Security Council to have the courage to take the historic step to reject clearly what Israel is doing in the occupied territories and to give a glimmer of hope for all the diplomatic efforts, including those supported by the Quartet, Russia and France, and all initiatives that deserve the unqualified support of the Security Council.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.